■ SUPER
Super Komiks: Anne, Angel and wildlife conservation

■ NEWS/A2
Name private donors to US lobby firm, Gonzales urged

■ WORLD/A11, A10
Asia's richest woman wins battle for late hubby's empire

Bush pleads guilty for Katrina disarray, vows biggest rebuilding ever

3 drown in floods as rains, traffic jams torment Metro

THREE PEOPLE, TWO OF THEM CHILDREN, were feared drowned in flood up to five feet deep, hundreds of vehicles were trapped in massive traffic jams, and power was knocked out in some areas as heavy rains yesterday pounded Metro Manila and nearby provinces.

As most streets, especially in Muntinlupa, metamorphosed into impassable rivers, motorists and pedestrians were forced to abandon their vehicles and slosh their way to safety.

Continued on A2

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Saturday, September 17, 2005 ■ 32pages / vol. 28 / no. 281

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UN security cools ardor of GMA 'hakot' crowd

By GDC. Cabonegro Jr.

GMA open to delay VAT

Tax on oil, electricity can wait, Gloria tells New York forum

Health care to collapse in two years, medics warn

By Dreinon V. Esguerra

WORKING TO HEALTH AUTHORITIES. The Philippine health care system will collapse within the next two to three years as dismal working conditions continue to drive local doctors and nurses overseas.

The Alliance of Health Workers (AHW) yesterday made the disturbing prediction, pointing out that a total of 31,000 nurses left the country for greener pastures abroad from 2000 to 2005 alone.

The claims that the country had close to 15,000 nurses every year during that short period, according to Josel Ebesio, AHW secretary general and nursing supervisor at the government-run Philippine General Hospital (PGH).

Worse, he said, more than 8,000 doctors joined the exodus to the west in nurses abroad from 2000 to 2004, and around 4,000 licensed physicians were now enrolled in nursing schools.

"Nine to doctor/nurse," Ebesio said separately after a forum in Quezon City. "If the trend continues, our health care system will collapse in the next two to three years."

Eudes Da Re Castro, president of the Philippine Medical Association, said about 30 percent of the country's 150,000 doctors had moved to North America.

Ebesio said opportunities for Filipino nurses were particularly plentiful in Canada, Ireland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Paid miserably for the Philippines, a nurse's exodus abroad is a local hospital's suffering.

CONTINUED A2

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE for President Arroyo as she addresses the United Nations General Assembly on Friday (Manila time). She was one of 151 world leaders who delivered brief speeches at the world body, which is celebrating its 60th founding anniversary

By GIL C. Cabonegro Jr.

NEW YORK CITY (VIA PLDT) —In an apparent change of heart, President Macapagal Arroyo indicated yesterday she was amenable to deferring the imposition of a 10-percent value-added tax on fuel and electricity—as long as this would be an initiative of Congress and not the Executive branch.

Sen. Manuel A. Roxas II and Rep. Jose Solis were filed separate resolutions in Congress to delay the implementation on petroleum and power rules of the Expanded Value-Added Tax Law.

The Supreme Court has upheld the constitutionality of the law. Many say of the opposition of the late Ilocos Sur Governor Chavit Singson for reconsideration of the court ruling, the temporary restraining order it issued on the VAT law would be dismissed lifted and the law would take effect by then, court officials said yesterday.

"If the resolutions don't pass, then we will proceed with carrying out with the reforms and, if the resolutions are passed, we will respect Congress' advice to us, but it does not take us away from our deficit reduction program. ... We respect their wisdom," Ms. Arroyo said in a forum with the Credit Suisse First Boston in New York.

Ms. Arroyo had previously kept a firm stance on implementing the law, citing the importance of the funds to be generated by the VAT on fuel and power to solving the country's fiscal deficit.

CONTINUED A2

'Aragoncillo sent documents direct to RP officials'

By Lolyn B. del Puerto

HUMBERTO ELPOLIO (HOUSTON MICHAEL) Rep. Aquino yesterday denied having acted as a spy for any Filipino official during his stay in the United States.

Speaking through his lawyer, Rep. Vitaliano Aguirre, Aquino admitted to having received e-mails from Federal Bureau of Investigation intelligence analyst Leandro Aragoncillo, but said he did not "transmit" any document to any Filipino official.

He said he was simply "very interested" in Aragoncillo, who had sent them directly to officials in the Philippines.

Aquino, who was arrested by the FBI last Sept. 10 along with Aragoncillo, also said he had never regarded the information he got as classified, and therefore easy of knowing that it was.

He said he was "never employed by any Philippine official, past or present, regular or clandestine information analyst Leandro Aragoncillo, but said he did not "transmit" any document to any Filipino official.

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Aquino's detention hearing scheduled for Sept. 21 (Sept. 22 in Manila) at the US District Court of New Jersey has been postponed to an unspecified date.

In a phone interview with the Inquirer yesterday, Assistant US State attorney Rod Bush disclosed that counsel-in-office lawyer Mark Berman, who had been assigned by the court to represent Aquino, requested the postponement.

"Mr. Berman[s] is not available on that date," Bush said, adding that the court had yet to schedule the next hearing.

Bush also refused to disclose the identities of the three Filipino officials who had supposedly received classified information from either Aquino or Aragoncillo. Both

CONTINUED A2

A NEW YORK MOMENT for President Arroyo and her husband Mike who are reunited after more than a month of separation as he had exiled himself in the US to not to add to the burden of the presidency. They drive off into the night after greeting at a photo exhibit of presidential photographers at the Philippine Center on 5th Ave., New York. The President left for San Francisco yesterday to rendezvous with another visit by a day.

TRACING THE TRAIL OF THE TAPE

Where Garci was first heard to say hello

Editor's Note: Based on a series of interviews, the FBI's Team pieced together the beginnings of the "Hello Garci" tape that sparked a political crisis, the worst ever in the 4-year-old administration. More than 3 months after the crisis, a lot of questions remain unanswered, and no conclusion that they will be resolved for reasons that will become obvious as you read the series.

By Fe Zamora

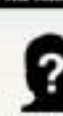
Story continues

INSIDE A ONE-STORY, WHITE BUILDING HOUSING some of the most sensitive secrets of the Philippine Armed Forces of the Philippines' (AFP) command, a 14-man team worked under supposed to a highly confidential security.

Working 24/7, team member T/Sgt. Feliz Jimlo watched over a computer, not bigger than an attaché case, as it intercepted the telephone calls and recorded the entire conversation of per-

CONTINUED A2

Who's the fifth lawyer who entered on the first page of the Garci tapes in Malacañang on June 5, 2005?



The TEAM Report

Behind the boys and beside women movie legends, a lot more have worked alibis in a highly confidential activity.

Panic, confusion started at the Palace on June 3

By Sonny Lirio

IT WAS SUNDAY NIGHT, JUNE 5, AND PRESIDENTIAL Spokesman Ronaldo Zamora was speaking over telephone.

On the phone, he talked of how Cabinet officials would be right for him to announce that Malacañang statement—at least 2 a copy of a taped conversation between President Macapagal-Arroyo and an official of the Commission on Elections.

"Do you think I should do this? Is this the right thing to do?" Zamora said.

Zamora earlier that day, a group of Palace officials decided that he should make the announcement the following day. He was to say that there were two tapes—the original and a spliced one.

Which one which, it would be for him to tell.

The next in the video mail of the line said: "It's up to you—if you want to do it, if you want to do it."

Zamora hung up looking confused.

This was how three key government officials—two of whom later quit their posts—de-

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2005
Second FRONTPAGE

WEATHER FORECAST

P50M FOR US LOBBY FIRM

Name donors, Gonzales dared

By Raj Panlilio
PDI Pampanga Bureau

ILOILO CITY—AN OPPOSITION LAWMAKER yesterday dared National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales to identify the private donors who would pay for the services of the US law firm Venable LLP which the Philippine government hired to lobby for US funding for various projects, including Charter change.

"The Filipino people have the right to know who are these private donors? Are they drug lords? Are they jueteng lords? Are they businessmen with interests to protect? Was dirty money smoothened by shady characters? What are their nationalities? Was the Anti-Money Laundering Law violated?" Hous Deputy Minority leader Ruben Ecleo asked.

The Iloilo congressman said it was ridiculous for Gonzales to say he did not know the donors because the job was merely to sign the contract on behalf of the government.

Opposition lawmakers have sought a congressional inquiry after learning that the Baltimore-based law firm Venable LLP would be paid $75,000 a month (or the equivalent of P4.2 million) by the cash-strapped government.

They branded the contract as tantamount to meddling in the country's internal affairs.

Sen. Alfonso Defensor Santiago yesterday said the Senate will subpoena Gonzales to explain the highly irregular contract he signed into—with Venable in behalf of the Philippine government.

Santiago said it is highly unusual for a National Security adviser to enter into such a contract since the task of the latter is merely to advise the President on policies relating to national security. "I have seen free Charter change here at issue of national security? she asked.

"If it were true that donors were really footing the bill, then all the better that we summon Secretary Gonzales to the Senate to let us reveal the identities of these donors," Santiago said.

Gonzales earlier said that Venable LLP, one of the top 100 law firms in the US, was hired primarily to lobby for US aid and funding for "mostly defense matters" and that the money for the House bill to amend the 1987 Constitution was just an added item.

Gonzales later claimed that private donations and not public funds would be used to pay for the services of Venable.

House Senior Deputy Majority Leader Arthur Defensor said a congressional inquiry was in the offing.

A constitutional expert said the Palace should take out the provisions in the Venable contract about the Philippine seeking US funding for revising the 1987 Constitution.

"It would be best to remove any wording in the contract in reference to US assistance. Removal or otherwise in the revision of the Constitution," Dr. Jose Abueva said.

Abueva said it was "wrong" and "unnecessary" for the Philippine government to ask foreign assistance for something that is "purely the ability of the Filipino people."

"Our integrity, sovereignty and self-respect of our nation are involved here," Abueva said in a phone interview.

He said the government "should be able to come for the cost of changing our Constitution." With reports from Christine D. Avendaño, Philip Robles and Norman Bordadora

Foreign investors watching drive to amend RP Charter

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

NEW YORK CITY (9th FLOT)—Foreign investors are eagerly watching if President Macapagal-Arroyo's drive to amend the Constitution will ease restrictions on land ownership, exploitation of natural resources and operation of communication media.

This was revealed by Finance Secretary Margarito Teves following various meetings with corporate leaders and money managers in New York as part of Ms Arroyo's drive to win back foreign investors.

"Foreign investors are looking at how we can further improve the investment climate because they are comparing the Philippines with what is available in other countries," Teves said. "Other countries are fairly more reliable with respect to foreign investments in land, natural resources, media, and so on."

Ms Arroyo himself addressed what some investors in the Philippines as well as P20 million in prospective investments in oil and gas exploration off the coasts of Mindoro, Cuyo and Palawan islands.

TEVES: Land ownership, mining, media

Teves said he and the country's other economic managers assured the businessmen that the Arroyo administration wants to leave economic roles in the hands of legislators instead of the Constitution. "If we can take that from the Constitution, it would be easier to amend through Charter change based not on economic policies but through legislation."

The Constitution expressly prohibits foreign investors from owning land and media entities in the country. The Mining Act, whose constitutionality was upheld by the Supreme Court last year, allows foreign mining firms to buy equity in mining projects that are limited by the Constitution to Filipinos.

At the same press briefing, Socioeconomic and Development Authority Secretary Ginnel Augusto-Sutton said he told the businessmen that the government was ready to handroll Charter change moves starting next year. Although the government did not allocate funds for Charter change in the 2006 budget, he said these expenditures could be drafted against the funds of Congress or Senate through a supplemental budget to be signed by the President.

GMA, Hu Jintao discuss more trade

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo and her China counterpart Hu Jintao discussed increased investments and energy security on the sidelines of the recent UN summit, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said yesterday.

Following the bilateral meeting between Ms Arroyo and Hu in New York, "we can expect more important deals between the Philippines and China as well as more investments from China particularly in the area of mining," Romulo said in a statement.

The meeting "also provided an important opportunity for the President to discuss energy security particularly the continued rise in oil prices," Romulo added.

Ms Arroyo believes it is important to consult with major consumers of oil in order to pursue a "global solution to the oil issue," Romulo added.

In by-visit here in April, Ho announced the signing of agreements for a $900-million Chinese nickel mining venture in the Philippines as well as $30 million in prospective investments in oil and gas exploration off the coasts of Mindoro, Cuyo and Palawan islands. AFP

Legitimacy issue to hug Noli, says Loren

FORMER SEN. LOREN Legarda yesterday said that the issue of "legitimacy" will haunt President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's rule if Commissioner Virgilio de Guzman is convicted for the recent bribery case involving former Comelec official Romulo Neri.

Reacting to the findings of the Senate blue ribbon committee on De Guzman's "culpability" in the alleged bribery of Neri, Legarda said that "political instability will continue if the new president is also perceived not to be legitimate because of massive cheating in the last elections."

Legarda, who ran for vice president in the 2004 elections, has filed an electoral protest against De Castro, claiming that massive electoral fraud had marred the elections.

Legarda also pointed out that in the SWS survey of Aug. 26-Sept. 5, only 26 percent of the respondents said that De Guzman was "fully culpable." The rest of the respondents, comprising 74 percent, therefore had some "doubts" about his culpability, she said.

20,000 jobs available on internet or by text message

By Jocelyn Arong

MORE THAN 20,000 JOBS IN 24 CATEgories are available to workers, who only need to send a text message or log on to the government's job placement website.

The Department of Labor and Employment yesterday disseminated the top 20 job vacancy categories as registered by employers and overseas employment providers in Phil.Jobnet.

DOLE's Bureau of local Employment reported that there were 20,379 vacancies available in the Phil.Jobnet, of which 61 percent (12,322 jobs) were in Manila and other regions, and the remaining 39 percent or 7,957 were overseas.

According to BLE director Maria Luisa Ligaray-Imperial, the top five job vacancy categories are customer service assistant (2,887), professional nurse (1,519), production machine operator (1,068), salesman (741), technician/engineer assistant (707).

The other 15 categories are sales representative (681), technical support staff (646), cashier (275), merchandiser (274), waitress (203), waiter/general (226), accounting assistant (216), production worker (211), domestic helper (203), programmer/web designer (200), sales representative (200), mechanical engineer (192), pastry chef (176), janitor (168) and building/deckhand (165).

There are more than 400 other job categories posted by employers and overseas employment providers available in the Phil.Jobnet system, Imperial said.

Interested job applicants may access the available vacancies in the Phil.Jobnet system simply by texting <TRABAHO> to 2256 (Globe) or 2478 (Smart), or accessing the information directly on the Internet at <www.phil-jobnet.dole.gov.ph>

Gov't, MILF resume talks

THE GOVERNMENT and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) have resumed informal talks after a two-month break, ordered amid government officials said yesterday.

Exploratory meetings on a proposed Muslim autonomy homeland in Mindanao had been stalled while President Macapagal-Arroyo was campaigning for reelection in last year's election.

"We're very optimistic that there will be a breakthrough in the negotiations," Sen. Al Haj Aquilino Pimentel Jr., a member of the government's panel, said.

"I hope the two sides can build on the current momentum and eventually seal the conflict that has brought misery to our people," Al Haj, who heads the rebels' panel meeting, even as the talks were expected to focus on how a proposed Muslim homeland would be governed.

The current round of informal talks is expected to end late last night to early today, sources in the government and Muslim rebel panels said.

"There's a very bright prospect of reaching an agreement very soon," said a member of the government's panel, who declined to be identified. Rumors

Jueteng out? Credit Cruz, says whistleblower

By Christine F. Esguerra

THERE RAGED ANY JUETENG OPERATIONS going on now, but neither President Macapagal-Arroyo nor antigambling czar Edmund Bagasbas should get the credit for it, said jueteng whistleblower Wilfredo "Boy" Mayor.

Mayor, who is a former big-time jueteng operator in Bicol, said the credit should go to Archbishop Oscar Cruz, the antigambling crusader who led a high-profile campaign against the illegal numbers game last April.

"Bagasbas should be ashamed of himself. He didn't have to do anything anymore because jueteng was almost wiped out way before he entered the scene," Mayor said.

He confirmed Bagasbas's announcement that only five percent of jueteng operations were left. But he said that this happened soon after Cruz began parading witnesses at the Senate investigation into jueteng last May.

Philippine National Police Director General Arturo Lomibao on Thursday said jueteng had been reduced to a "bare minimum" since then.

Cruz, who heads the Kaunlaran Bayan Laban sa Jueteng, sometime said jueteng had been reduced to only 10 percent. What remained was the "juetillo" type, so called because they jump from one area to another to avoid arrest, he said.

"Now, we have to guard against the possibility that jueteng would be reinvented with other forms of gambling," he said, citing Bingo Combo and the Small Town Lottery (STL).

Bagasbas, the czarist of Duterte-Pimentel, has been trying to sell the idea of the STL, a text-ball combination game initially introduced during the Aquino administration. He has till Oct. 28 to sell it to win a lease of franchise jueteng to Bet Ho Jalisi, before would choose a five-number combination from 1 to 38.

Cruz earlier denounced a government plan to introduce the Bingo Combo, another legal variety of jueteng to be supervised by the cash-hit Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp.

Mayor, who said he had been invited to set up a Bingo Combo franchise in Albay, gave the Bagasbas a copy of a seven-page Papcor document titled "Promotional Guidelines for Bingo Combo Betting Station Operators."

He said Bagasbas's visit now disrupted STL before small government executives became Bingo Combo boss-backed.

"I'll, in his way of supporting anyone who has huge sum in operations money since the jueteng scandal broke out. Bagasbas knows the racket's trying to make a fool out of Filipinos," he said.

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Government Warning: Cigarette smoking is dangerous to your health

'Aragoncillo sent documents ...

From page A1

men have been charged with espionage.

"I can't spend more than what I already said in the papers," Bush said.

He confirmed that Aquino was being held at the Pamaan County Correctional in New Jersey, but says none was Aragoncillo's boss.

'Be careful'

In Manila, National Bureau of Investigation Director Reynaldo Wycoco warned politicians against unfounded fear they were recipients of e-mails from Aquino or Aragoncillo.

"Administration at this time by anybody can be dangerous because it may be used as additional evidence to strengthen the case against the top officials involved in the case," Wycoco told reporters.

"At this time, it is premature for anyone to admit anything, so they should be careful in what they say," he said.

Aside from Lacson, former President Joseph Estrada, Senator Ilihan Hu, Senator Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Bonifacio Bay Mayor Nemi Jalosjos have denied receiving e-mails from Aquino or Aragoncillo.

Wycoco said the lawyers administration should file a formal protest against American espionage in the Philippines, adding that this was no "affront" to our sovereignty.

"I think the least the government can do is to summon the charge d'affaires in the US Embassy and ask for clarification on reports by major elite power players in the Philippines, especially stirring presidents this season, either to announce the name spree or to cancel some and change. Again, the Chinese good economic relations with Asia (US interests)."

Exhaustion needed

House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles has joined the opposition in calling for the Philippine government to ask the US government why it was not playing severe files on Philippine leaders and political developments.

"We should ask FBI and their (US) to explain why they spy on us when we are allies," Nograles told the Inquirer.

But he said a diplomatic protest would not be necessary at this point.

"(All we need is) a simple inquiry, Mr. Embassy, (The Department of) Foreign Affairs should handle this," he said.

Deputy Speaker for Minorities Gerry Salapuddin said opposition leaders should stop prompting the FBI by proclaiming that they did not receive secret information from Aquino.

"The truth will be out soon enough. No amount of cover-up or denial will change the outcome of the probe," Salapuddin said, adding:

"It is just a matter of time before the real mastermind in the spy operations is revealed. Let us stop the guessing game and wait for the FBI to declare who the US agents are in the Philippines and bring culprits up," said Pablo Bebot Jr.

With reports from Bloomgene C. Ortiz, Philip C. Tubeza and Norman Bordadora in Manila; Michael Jon Chua in New York

ACQUIRED: He's an ego, says his lawyer

From page A1

refuse him to tell about," Golez said.

"This caused lawyers in Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan, or wherever countries. They can do this to Afghanistan, but the Philippines is not Afghanistan," he added.

Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo said he would file a resolution on Monday calling on the House of Representatives to investigate the matter.

Ocampo said it was "an open secret" that the Joint US Military Advisory Group and the General Intelligence Agency station in the US Embassy were "the nerve centers of such espionage efforts."

"Why I also ask: Did the US undertake arrest, detain and charge ... Aragoncillo and ... Aquino only because they spied for the wrong parties and not for the Arroyo clique?" Ocampo said.

He added: "I ask this question because we cannot discount the possibility that the US may be maintaining spies, undertaking spying operations, and hosting so-called confidential informants in the Philippines."

Michael Ray caper: 'Controlled leak' gone wrong?

By TJ Burgonio

THE FEDERAL BUREAU OF Investigation had a hand in the leak of classified information on Philippine officials, and tried to cover up when it was exposed to the media by using its agent, according to retired Navy Commodore Rex Robles.

"My assumption is that it's a controlled leak gone wrong," Robles, chief of the Philippine military intelligence service's counterintelligence in 1998-'92, said yesterday in separate interviews.

He was referring to US authorities' purported practice of sending intelligence information to political leaders and top businessmen in an effort to build counterintelligence cases.

Robles said it was possible an intervention agent "who wanted to grab the bidder" exposed the communication of 101 classified information to outsiders "without knowing it was a legitimate operation" of Aragoncillo responsible, the source said.

"I'm sorry this is, the FBI is now filing pseudo-charges [against Aragoncillo] so that the trail leading to the higher-level authority who ordered the leak will be erased," he said.

After viewing from the military in 1999, Robles, now governor of the country risk management consultancy RCB, was included in the "blue book" of intelligence officials.

He was a member of the Robles Commission (but related) into the causes of the July 2003 "Oakwood mutiny" mounted by a band of disgruntled junior military officers.

Robles did not discount the possibility that the disclosure of Aragoncillo's operation to the media was a counter-offensive of the rivalry between the Republicans and Democrats in Washington.

"Aragoncillo could have been caught in the middle of this rivalry," he said, adding that even the US naval intelligence community did not buy the claim that the agent had sold the information for $100,000.

"He's a bit guy," Robles said. "The Democrats know this."

As it happened, Robles

ROBLES: Ousted from US treatment due an ally

said, this was an embarrassment to both the Philippine and US governments because the arrest of Aragoncillo and Michael Ray Aquino coincided with President Macapagal-Arroyo's arrival in New York.

"Why did they do this at a time when the political climate is still volatile?" he said.

He also said he found it odd that Aragoncillo managed to download hundreds of classified information from FBI files undetected.

Robles chided Senator Jovito Salonga, Raul Gonzalez and Executive Reynaldo Wycoco of the National Bureau of Investigation for hinting on the identities of the three supposed recipients of the information even before they could be formally charged.

"Why don't we keep a tight lid on it and demand Dennis the FBI treatment due a friendly ally and resolve this quietly? Let's not create scandal with no little information is no benefit," he said.

Robles further charged that by suggesting the retroactive of the three recipients of the information before they would be identified, DOJ and NBI officials were virtually "selling the country's sovereignty."

"What if Gary Brooks Penn chair Congress inquiries and Estrada (deposed President Joseph Estrada) were among the officials? Would they surrender as former President?" he said.

Health care to collapse in two years, medics warn

From page A1

The unabated exodus of Filipino doctors and nurses, coupled with insufficient funding from the government, has forced a number of disease-ridden hospitals to shut down, officials said.

In Isabela, he said, at least nine government hospitals were closed in 2003 because not enough doctors and nurses could be found.

He also said two district hospitals in Abra were closed because of the lack of doctors.

Aside from the "brain drain" that is affecting the country, Robles said, the Philippine military is also losing its best officers to the private sector because of low salaries

Singapore police allow hubby to visit wife in jail

SINGAPORE – A FILIPINO MAID ACCUSED of murdering a compatriot and dismembering her body was remanded for another week on Friday, but police allowed a visit by her husband, who had been flown in from the Philippines.

Guen Aguilar, 29, and the mother of two young children, broke into tears as she spied her husband, Edwin, among the largely Filipino audience inside the courtroom where her case was heard.

It was the first time in three years that Aguilar saw her husband, and a visit was being arranged later in the day to the police remand center, said lead defense lawyer Shashi Nathan.

A district court judge granted a request by state prosecutors to keep Aguilar in remand for one more week to allow police to complete their investigation.

Aguilar has been charged with murder, a crime punishable by hanging, for the death of fellow maid Jane La Puebla, whose head and limbs were found inside a sports bag along Singapore's Orchard Road shopping district on Sept. 9.

A torso suspected to be La Puebla's was later found at a nature park.

In Manila, Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson yesterday pledged to give assistance to the family of La Puebla. Singson said he was touched by the reported lament of La Puebla's husband that while government assistance was immediately extended to his wife's suspected killer, no help has been given to the La Pueblas.

"I will see to it that the needs of the La Puebla family are attended to. Of course, I will also assist the Aguilar family," Singson said in a press statement.

The La Puebla family is from Nueva Vizcaya province while the Aguilars are from Ilocos Sur.

Nathan was able to briefly speak to her client before yesterday's proceedings at the Subordinate Court.

Nathan said Aguilar's husband, Edwin, who had flown in from Manila late Thursday would stay on the sidelines during the visit.

"It's a bit of a human touch at this moment. It's not so much legal. I think today let them be together, let her and her husband spend as much time together.

"They have not seen each other for three years, and it's quite sad that the first time he's seeing her she's in the dock, so I think let's give them whatever privacy we can give them together," Nathan said.

With waist-long hair, Aguilar was clad in jeans and apparently in the same yellow shirt and blue sweater she wore during the first court session last Sunday.

The Philippine ambassador to Singapore, Belen Anota, top embassy officials and members of the Filipino community in Singapore turned out for the hearing. *AFP*

Public must understand Singapore criminal justice system, says Sto. Tomas

LABOR SECRETARY PATRICIA STO. TOMAS yesterday said the public must understand Singapore's criminal justice system to allay anxiety about the case of Filipino maid Guen Aguilar, who is accused of murdering and dismembering a compatriot, Jane La Puebla.

"We have to understand that Singapore has a different judicial system and criminal court procedures. Our judgment on whether Aguilar is being given due process or not should not be based on the Philippine legal framework," Sto. Tomas told reporters.

The Aguilar case has sparked intense interest because of the parallels with that of Flor Contemplacion that sparked street protests and a diplomatic row with Singapore. Contemplacion was hanged 10 years ago for murdering another Filipino maid and a 4-year-old Singaporean boy.

Sto. Tomas explained that Singapore criminal procedures are unlike the Philippines' which are fully transparent. The British-inspired Singaporean judicial system has done away with indictments and automatically prescribes the death penalty for first-degree murder and drug trafficking.

In the Philippines, a crime suspect is first indicted by a prosecutor before the case is brought to court. He has access to counsel at all times and may even be interviewed by media.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development yesterday appealed to the media to be more careful about interviewing the families of Aguilar and La Puebla.

Acting DSWD Secretary Liwayway Pablo explained that these families were poor barrio folk who were not used to media attention and rigid questioning. *Jerome Aning and Cynthia D. Balana*

Where Garci was first heard to say hello

From page A1

group received reports. Doble said he was informed by his superiors that the subscriber for those phone plants for the political opposition during the May 14, 2004 elections.

All of the recordings, Doble, or some other member of the team, would then bring to Garcillano, who verified the intercept via a copier of files. Following the code of secrecy, Doble said the team proceeded to destroy the tape. Except that in this case, they did not.

Then on May 23, the home of the maidservant-like digital spies that brought you the "Hello Garci" tapes.

Barely minutes besieging at the opera cottage serving in the mid-dle of the lagoon-wood theme mo-ment ground that stood. Three digital eavesdroppers were recording would trigger the most political crisis in the 4-year-old presidency of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo.

Alerted officially on Military Intelligence Group 22 (under Lt. Col. Pedro Jumapao Jr., Maj. 22 battalion "technical intelligence" gathering for the body, the pre-hired spy agency of the military.

A highly-specialized unit, May 23 at the Malacañang Palace. Its agents trained in gathering intelligence using electronic gadgets, in what would be often referred to as "bugging" and "wiretapping." That ex-plosive why following the exposure of the "Hello Garci" tapes, a total number of officials from Malacañang and the military acquired right off the list the tapes could only have been recorded by May 23.

A retired general and a colonel with whom had worked with the body on intelligence purposes, now formed the pickup on at the office beside the body-hair-knob lagoon.

Tap, transcribe, destroy

According to them, the May 23 fellows simply video "tap," transcribe then destroy the tape," intended, the "tapping taken place one-side," said the colonel. "For the transcribing and the announcing no-action done on the May 23 office."

The syncopation includes the time and the identity of the callers, if they were identified as all. But the tape is always recorded after the conversation "so there's no live evidence," the colonel explained. "What's important at the time, the operational data found in the transcript," he said.

May 23 has about 100 employees consisting of supervisors, technicians, drivers, security and administrative personnel.

A keen observer might notice telecommunications vans enter the body compound usually about 5 p.m., and push out the gate, seem-ingly unaffected May 23 office.

June 6

But it was far from quiet on June 6. Along with Jumapao, body chief Brig. Gen. Mario Quirante and others, the security officials responsible for the day thrilling in inventory of tapes and transcripts while trying to explain to higher quarters, all the way to the Palace, an apparent security lapse.

And Quirante had to deny straightened that the body was engaged in "wiretapping" because "it does not have the capability."

But Doble, in a videotaped statement unknown to his body superiors at the time, said that part of a 10-man team assigned to monitor former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano and opposition leaders for a period before, during and after the May 10 elections. He also admitted that the tapes he gathered "could be used to monitor suspected terrorists."

Jumapao sources agree that the order to conduct "technical surveillance" on Garcillano could easily extend to anyone "high," no doubt a powerful figure in Malacañang.

Most of the sources point their finger to a person "very close" to the President. The motive? "On what it was there was great suspicion on the May 10, 2004 elections as ex-pose (ARMM) money. Therefore, he must be watched," said a source with links to the First Couple.

Other targets

The number of the cell phone targeted for monitoring was given either to Jumpa or Sumayo, who ordered the number programmed into the military communications equipment. To carry out the task, Jumapao created a 14-man team, which included Doble, and had the plan approved by Lt. Col. Allen Capuyan, chief of Operations and Intelligence Center (OIC).

"Operations is the heart of intelligence. All operations must pass through OIC," a Jumapao colonel who worked with OIC-3 in the '90s said.

Doble's affidavit was not the first target. In a videotaped statement, Doble said they also monitored opositionistas like Agustin Nathan Sanchez, Romeo "Boy" Morales and movie actor Eric Quizon, who were identified with the late Fernando Poe Jr.

Before, during, after

According to the Doble video, the monitoring took place "before, during and after" the May 10 elections. According to him, the most wiretaps were taped and those tapes were kept at his office in Bldg 21.

But the equipment of the tape, and perhaps its memory mine, was kept in Bldg 22, which is off-limits to "civilians" except those with the proper orders they heard the familiar voice of the President, one of the sources said. In fact, none of the monitoring team knew the identity of the person they were monitoring because they were only told to record the conversation, Doble said.

The President's voice on the tape also caught Palace officials off-guard, according to sources assigned to monitor all other targets of the Palace when they heard the tape on June 2. (See related story on Page A7.)

For months, the "tape" was a secret kept by Big 21. Rumors about the "damning tape" began to started to leak out by October or November, said a number sources. "The rumblings of the election was still in the air. Nobody really cared," the source said.

Superior orders

It would not be until March 2, 2005, that Ong would get hold of the four "master tapes" from "superiors of the body who are my friends." He said in a videotaped conversation with Bishop Teodoro Bacani at the San Carlos Seminary on June 10, 2005.

"When they gave them to me, they said, 'Eh, please take care of these tapes. Don't make copies,'" he said, adding he recalled his meeting with his body friends.

According to Ong, the body superiors also cautioned that the order to conduct the monitoring came in the form of a "verbal order" and gave them by their superior officer "Without any order from our superiors, we could not (monitor). As good soldiers, we just follow," Ong quoted them as saying.

Ong said the tape was 90-minutes each side, or around of 180 minutes per tape. He said he got "one hand" after listening to the tapes, but not so confused as to forget to scrape one of the master tapes.

He said he then made copies, and gave a copy to a "business brother" who is a ranking officer in the AFP another copy to a close friend (who is also a ranking AFP official) and a copy to another "business brother". He kept the "master tape" of the three wiretaps, and gave the three other master tapes to three fraternal brothers for "safekeeping."

Huling eng'kanto

"The same I am producing now is the mother of all tapes going around today," Ong declared.

The tape reached ex-President Estrada's camp also in April, courtesy of Ong himself, who approached Estrada's Manila-based lawyers, according to an Estrada source. Morales subsequently brought the tape to Estrada, who "bought" the tape from Ong at around Php 15 million, the source said. The source was confirmed by Estrada's counsel on Lazaro's file report, who allegedly authorized "hiding ng laugh," (gift from heaven), according to the same source.

Morales admitted he was among the first to hear the "Hello Garci" tape. But he denied knowing about it from Ong. "I learned about it from a group," he told the Inquirer. He denied having told Estrada about it, too. In fact, Morales said he had the first United States news after. His trip backed another rumor that he brought the tape from the United States.

Former Sen. Francisco "Kit" Tatad said a tape was mailed to him anonymously April 1 or 2 with the tape with two preparing to go to New York. But when Pope John Paul II died on April 3, Tatad decided to go to Rome instead for the funeral. The couple was away for a month. It was only after they returned to Manila that the tape was heard, found a note inquiring if he had listened to the tape.

Publically charged

"I listened to it carefully, and I realized it was very damning," Tatad said. He had to re-played, and gave the tape to Sen. Loren, who sent the tape abroad for safekeeping-in. Tatad's copy, the one he got through the mail, was turned over to PCIJ. Allan Paguia "for legal study."

Tatad said he also started talking to "personalities" in the church and academe about the tape. But he did not play the tape out. "I just told them there is such a tape," Tatad said.

He said he would have seemed a "non-patriot" group to bring out the tape. But unknown to him, Bagua had prepared compact discs of the controversial portions of the 180-minute tape. "He was very very discreet (he was having to accuse people, as it turns)," Tatad said.

On May 28 or 29, business-man-columnist Antonio "Ka Moning" Tan Lazaro said he was invited by Bagua to a meeting. From a restaurant along T. Morato. The Lazaro said he boarded Pagsa's car.

"He was providing around Cubao-Makati, you know, just going around," Tan Lazaro said, adding Bagua was "very discreet" with not-taking a copy of the CD. Tan Lazaro denied leaning from the "source" of the CD that resulted Malacañang.

Tatad felt that the copy he received could be "one of the first" copies that Ong made from the "mother of all tapes." It was possible that one copy went to Estrada through Morales, and the other copy was given to Sen. Serafin Lazaro through a lawyer close to Ong, Lazaro said. He said the Inquirer he got a tape "from an independent source."

Agents make copies

An Inquirer source, the retired general's earlier cited, in this report, learned that the possibility of not one, but several agents, making their own copies of the tape. He noted that the accusation was made by "his source," one of them Doble's. "The source accused, confirmed and corroborated the report to their superiors. They must know that the tape was redone," he said.

An affidavit filed by Mariano Santos, Doble's landlord, showed that the tape that ended the Arroyo presidency had been in Doble's house. Doble, whom she referred to as Jeff—who gave it to Ong through Lito Santiago, a driver-philosopher at BIR and a trusted bodyguard of Ong. But Mariotta was not present when Doble handed it to Dagoi Marsh. What she would witness was the videotaping of Dobles admission as source of the tape.

Doble's arrest, however, would be denied by the body and the AFP's chief of staff. Doble did not have the equipment, or the mandate, to conduct wiretapping, that retired and active body officials interviewed by the Inquirer said otherwise. "Wiretapping is of limited scope, covert operation, and only for matters that involve national security," a former body chief stressed. (To be continued)

Panic, confusion started at the Palace on June 3

From page A1

scribed how the President's spokesperson unwittingly found himself at the center of the "Hello, Garci" wiretapping controversy.

That occurred the turn of events in separate interviews with the Inquirer.

Wednesday group

Bunye had emerged from the meeting with other Palace officials very uneasy about his assignment.

Among those at the meeting were Defense Secretary Avelino Cruz, Ricardo Saz, Rodolfo Pena, Tomas Aquinaldo, Willie Villanueva. Then Sec. Ronaldo Puno (the President's brother), Jose Miguel "Mike" Arroyo—all members of the Wednesday group.

The group was so named because its members regularly met every Wednesday. Sometimes, Palace staff members purposively called it the "Shadow Cabinet" for distinguish it from the official Cabinet that meets every Tuesday.

The Wednesday group had been meeting since June 2, playing and replaying the tape in a room at the Palace.

The President dictated up at the meeting that Friday, shortly after Malacañang received a copy of the tape from a government lawyer.

By narrative, the tape caught the President by surprise.

Said a former Palace official: "Garci was in the man at the other end of the line was exactly the way the gave orders to us. He uses examples things when she wants to get his point across."

All of those present at the meeting were assessed that a new set of issues talking, the lascivious content said. They agreed that the tape—and there was one, not two—had to be destroyed.

Quirante, who is a copy and on the night of June 4, called his superior to request receipt of the tape. The superior later confided a Malacañang official.

The lawyer met his superior at the Presidio Perfil, a few steps across from the Palace. He gave his superior a copy of the tape, which eventually found its way to the Wednesday group.

Quoting the lawyer, the superior told the Palace source that the source of the tape had also given two opposition leaders a copy each and that the opposition was preparing to announce its contents.

This was what prompted the panic meetings of the Wednesday group.

One Inquirer source said it was the gold CD, the original tape, which the government lawyer received from Garcillano.

The silver CD was a reproduction, a product of the Wednesday group's collaboration, the source said, adding:

"(The original) was he only CD that Garcillano and others are more reproductions, especially the ones with voice-overs, and those are bogus."

The Wednesday group came out with the silver copy or the "bogus" copy, the source said.

"When you present a problem, you offer a solution. Beside man a solution, a full guy," the source quoted his lawyer as saying.

Press conferences

The Wednesday group found that the opposition was to hold a multimedia press conferences on the tape in Metro Manila, Hong Kong (supposedly in his conduct) and in San Francisco (Loren Tatad) and Singapore (to be conducted by an incumbent senator) on June 8.

Opposition leaders denied this, but the Palace sources did not buy their denials. Ong, a Makati cabinet official phoned a high profile PR man who was then in Hong Kong and demanded to know if it was true that he was organizing there a news conference on the tape's contents.

Furious, the PR man said he was in Hong Kong only to play golf.

He calmed down only after talking to a newly-confirmed Cabinet member, who told him "I will take care of you."

Bag order for Garci

Bunye hailed to executive many people, least of all the three lascivious sources.

When a copy of the tape reached the Wednesday group that Friday afternoon, it seem only one thing—there is truth to the issue that what press secretary Bunye denied, the rumors said.

They said evidence of the President's sins as a politician known to be skilled in political operations were behind the order given to Garcillano to "do what is necessary" to ensure the victory of the Arroyo-Noli de Castro ticket.

According to the sources, urging Garcillano was meant to ensure that he would abide by the agreement that Garcillano and certain Palace officials—that he would maintain "some tolerance" in the May 2004 presidential elections.

The lady soldiers did as ordered, but half of the promised 1 billion did not reach them. They waited, but soon felt that they were forgotten in the euphoria of Mr Arroyo's victory.

It was then that they thought of "revenge" by the tape and selling the copy to the opposition. (See story on Page A1-2)

Hill war

After the opposition came out with copies of the tape, Malacañang officials, especially those not part of the Wednesday group, gorged up on Bunye.

He also drew flak from opposition members in the House of Representatives for his early days of the "Hello, Garci" investigation.

At one point in the inquiry, House Minority Leader Francis Escudero asked Bunye if it was true that he got copies of the tape from one Reynaldo Esmeralda of the National Bureau of Investigation.

Bunye sidestepped the question, but Escudero repeatedly asked to answer the question.

Both Bunye and NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco denied having received the tape from Esmeralda. He later, chief of the NBI's special task force unit, issued a statement denying media interviews.

Text messages

Palace officials touching the released House hearing were shocked. Where did Escudero get that information?

Escudero's question was based on a text message sent by his office lawyer in the opposition, Sonali Catalina Say. Darlene Antonino-Custodio.

In turn, Custodio received a text message sent by an aide of former MB Deputy Speaker Samuel Ong. The was sent after both watching the hearing at a Bonifacio Global City (BGC) bar.

Ong has been in hiding since declaring that he had the "mother of all tapes" in a news conference in Makati City on June 14.

Inquirer sources said members of the Wednesday group have changed blame, but singled out Bunye for supposedly inattending the June 6 briefing and the subsequent House and media briefings.

Hyatt 10

On July 3, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, along with Cabinet Officials Ohh Abalos (political adviser) and Rigoberto Tiglao (chief of the Presidential Management Staff), have taken center stage in defending the President.

Tiglao is now the de facto spokesman-coordinator. However, sources say he is not a whole who quit the post on July 9.

Rep. Teodoro Puno has also since become highly visible at the Palace. (A former Cabinet member said she did not realize that Puno was the brother of President Arroyo there's all Chicago, not the time she was in Malacañang.)

Priority shift

The sources said the high priority of Ermita, Defensor, Cloma and Tiglao signaled a shift in Palace priority from economic issues to national security.

Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza and Public Works Secretary Simeon Datumanong have also been recruited to the Palace's inner circle—presumably the sources said, to handle Garcillano and the "Hello, Garci" wiretapping issue.

On July 13, Bunye told the inquirer that he had also tendered his resignation, effective as soon as the President found a replacement. It was the fourth time he had quit since he joined Malacañang in early 2001.

By then, the man Bunye was talking with on the phone on the eve of his "Hello, Garci" press briefing had liberate quit.

GMA open to VAT delay

GMA proposes relief for debt-ridden nations

IN A 5-MINUTE SPEECH at the UN General Assembly, Ms Arroyo yesterday urged the world body to help heavily indebted developing countries, like the Philippines, to reinvest half of their debt interest service in pro-poor programs.

"We are not asking for debt forgiveness or debt cancellation," she said. "What we propose is that the debt service, or principal amount, should be converted to equity in new projects of at least equal value and with their potential earnings."

Based on Ms Arroyo's proposal, the Philippines could reinvest up to 50 percent of its debt for debt-equity financing programs under the Debt-Investment Development Goals, which aims to reduce the incidence of poverty to the world by half by 2015.

The 15-day period for the up-

to 41 oral interventions last year, the Philippines has a total foreign debt of $114.8 billion and spends 60 centavos out of every peso in the government budget to pay for principal and the interest.

Ms Arroyo argued that while debt relief for impoverished countries was laudable, "there are also many middle-income countries who are highly indebted and have large populations that need at least some help."

"I hope that this debt plan will find its way into the Summit declaration and the Paris Club, the G-8 governments, the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and World Bank, the regional development bank, and the world's large commercial banks will approve this proposal. We offer this option to alleviate energy crunch," she said.

"After Monday, if nobody files at MR (motion for reconsideration), the ICSID can be considered final already ... Monday is the last day for the filing of an MR," some spokespersons hinted. But it could be less than that.

But he said the lifting of the TRO would not be automatic, saying the court would have to first issue an "order of judgment" upon lapse of the deadline.

The opposers had questioned the constitutionality of the provision of the law giving the Energy Secretary authority to increase VAT rate to 12 percent in January, among others. With a report from Armando Nocum

Palace may have to redo budget—DOF

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT WILL HAVE to revise its proposed P1.89-trillion budget for 2006 if the plan to create oil and electricity from VAT justice through the finance department could yesterday.

Finance Undersecretary Emmanuel Bonoan told reporters the proposed budget already is computed to it the entire P64 billion worth of expected incremental revenues from the VAT reform law.

But if oil and electricity would remain exempted from VAT, then the government would have to redo its budget programming for 2006.

Under the originally proposed 2006 fiscal program, expenditures are placed at P1.89 trillion, while the expected revenue collection is at P966.6 billion, thus resulting in a deficit of P724.9 billion.

UN security cools ardor of GMA 'bakot' crowd

(Several President Macapagal-Arroyo's parliamentary speech before the 60th UN General Assembly in New York, barring the United Nations security disaster-the national, one group.

The "bakot" (chapel) boys led by Pasay Speaker Jose de Venecia were present in all of the President's UN engagements in the last three days.

They clapped their hands when Ms Arroyo was introduced as the next speaker, prompting a police bus driver to wonder from UN security.

One of 151

The President is just one of 151 leaders who were slated to deliver a speech at United Nations's New York headquarters. Speeches in these events are considered pro forma, with some leaders speaking before mostly empty seats.

Much so many leaders appeared to stand before the session till day, the UN reminded leaders to keep their speeches brief and their respective delegates not to members in the proceedings. This was why the UN security expressly initiated the audience in the gallery to refrain from clapping.

The group again showed of the latter part of the President's speech. This time, however, the UN security gave the droops boomers

dagger looks, but chose to let the "exuberant past since the President's speech was very brief.

The "pals" boys finally parted ways with Ms Arroyo when she flew to San Francisco yesterday to attend her visit in the United States by a day.

Reunion

The President will meet for the first time in a long while her eldest son, Rep. Jose Miguel Arroyo, who has been in voluntary exile with First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo in Hard San Francisco home since June this year.

Bringing the congressman to the Arroyo hunter group were Rep. Anthony Miranda (Isabela), Carmelita Villaroya (Mindoro Oriental), Herminia Ramirez (Mindoro Occidental), Emilio Ramon Ojeda, Reynaldo Aquino, Ana Rizli Bondoc (Batanguas), Jodi Lapuz (Tarlac), Raul del Mar (Cebu), Antonio Cuenco (Cebu), Herman Sean-Sean (Cebu), Reylina Nicolas (Bulacan), and Lorna Silverio (Bulacan). The local governments officials in the group were Baclaran Jaime Ecot, Bais Evardone, Iloilo Gov. Boni Tupas, Agusan del Sur Governor Adolph Edward Plaza, Catanduanes Gov. Leandro Peñarlo, Catanduan Bid Gov. Luis Raymund Villafuerte, Davao City Mayor Rianon Bautista, and Bontoguin City Mayor Sally Lee.

3 drown in floods . . .

hours to rescue stranded people and search for the missing. (Survivalled stories on Page A1 H).

4 flights cancelled

Four domestic flights were cancelled while 15 others were delayed, the Manila International Airport Authority (Miaa) said.

In Mandaluyo, Metro Manila, 24, and his two sisters, Angel and Alice Arabejo, aged 1 and 3, were swept away by the strong current in Nueng Diablo creek after their motorcycle stalled in the knee-deep floodwater at 5 a.m., their aunt Jennifer Michael Jocson said.

The three victims were under their makeshift house when the La guna de Bay swelled, drowned residents in Barangay Mayapa in Calamba and swept away their bus and two others, relief officials said.

City Link Management office Rene Dollesin said the two children were among the killed by the floods that robbed their houses collapsed.

"Their father accidentally let go of them ... There is a possibility that they did not survive," he said.

But two other children, Sittie Jhoyce Arabejo, 5, and Jhoy Ann Arabejo, were rescued from the swollen creek.

Two people were injured when a landslide swept three shanties in Barangay Santiago, Tanay, Rizal, in Antipolo City, police said.

Respite tomorrow?

The weather bureau said the country could expect a respite from the rain and rain-causing tomorrow when the active low pressure area that triggered yesterday's downpour shall have moved out of the Philippine area of responsibility.

Satellite images as of 9 p.m. yesterday showed the low pressure area had passed southwestern Zambales and was moving toward the South China Sea, where it was likely to merge with a tropical depression, the Philippine atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration said.

"It may merge and become a strong typhoon, but it will not hit the Philippines anymore. It may head toward Vietnam," Pagasa weather forecaster Anthony chief Nemesio Sepiturgo said.

It's clearing in Visayas

Metro Manila and the rest of Luzon, however, would continue to experience rains in the next 24 hours due to the monsoonal convergence zone covering southern and central Luzon and western Visayas.

"It's already clearing in the Visayas area. The concentration now is in Western Visayas and Southern and Central Luzon, but it's not as intense because the LPA has already moved out," Sepiturgo said.

A low pressure area is a system that causes cloudy skies and rains, and may develop into a tropical depression or typhoon within the next several months reaches 55 kph. The latter low pressure area that passed the country was 30 kph.

Better safe than sorry

In Paranaque City, Mayor Florencio Bernabe declared suspension of classes in public and private schools at the elementary and high school levels.

"It's better to be safe than sorry," the mayor said.

Hundreds of residents had to be evacuated from their homes in the Marikina Valley after the Marikina River swelled to alarming levels beginning Thursday night.

By 11 a.m., however, most of the residents had gone back home.

But the Tatalon Bridge remained impassable to motorists as of mid-afternoon yesterday.

Despite the bad weather conditions, the Miaa's flight advisory as of 11:30 a.m. said that there were "minimal operations" at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) Terminal 1, used by international airlines, and at the Naia Centennial Terminal, which is used exclusively for the domestic and international flights of Philippine Airlines (PAL).

Garbage to blame, too

The rain-ampi rains caused traffic backups in the eastern and southern parts of the national capital region, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) said.

MMDA Deputy Chief Court Lucena said about 150 cars of rainwater fell over Metro Manila from 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Thursday. Coupled with garbage and debris in the drainage system, the downpour caused flash floods in low lying areas and sudden flooding in cities where major waterways had overflowed.

The heavy downpour also forced the Department of Public Works and Highways to close several of three roads in Northern and Central Luzon yesterday.

Sections of Tarlac-Pangasinan-La Union expressway, the Subic section of the Tarlac-Subic-Clark-Tipo in Calauga area, Pampanga, and the Bataan-Cavite interlink bridge were also declared closed.

9-hour traffic jam

Hundreds of vehicles were stranded as the rains caused a nine-hour traffic congestion along the northbound and southbound lanes of the South Luzon Expressway (Slex) on Thursday midnight until early Friday morning.

According to Lenel Lumicao, traffic operator of the Philippine National Construction Corp., the bottleneck in the stalled vehicles lasted some 9 hours as the rains along the north-bound lane at about 11:45 p.m.

At about the same time, the Alabang in nearby Sta. Rosa town was also affected by heavy flooding.

Along the southbound lane, traffic slowed due to a stretch of the Slex lies in the flooded area in Bicutan Heights.

In the southbound area, vehicles were stalled along the six kilometer stretch of Carmona Exit to Bicutan Heights.

In Pasig, Laguna, the surrounding Pasig River overflowed, flooding several houses of Barangay Sila.

Many officers inside Camp Crame lost power on Thursday night when strong winds flooded out electric installations. Reports from Jocelyn R. Ui, Blanche S. Rivera, Sitti Y. Matimandin, Nikko Dizon, Lutge A. del Puerto, Leila B. Salaverria, Marnie Carreon, Jil Tiu, Marlen Ramos with a report from Romulo G. Peters, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

DOST announces new batch of S & T scholars from Muslim and indigenous communities

Secretary Estrella F. Alabastro of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) announces the names of thirty-six (36) qualifiers out of a total of 140 examinees who took the 2005 GREAT-M scholarship examinations held in five (5) test centers in Mindanao last July 30, 2005. GREAT-M stands for Grants for Educational Assistance on Technology and Science Teaching Courses in Mindanao. "This is an educational grant on technology and science teaching courses offered by the government to poor, talented and deserving students from the Muslim and indigenous communities of Mindanao," Secretary Alabastro said.

Twelve (12) examinees qualified under the Science and Mathematics Teaching, while twenty four (24) qualified for the Technician Course.

Applicants to the scholarship program came from the provinces of Basilan, Sulu, Tawi-tawi, Lanao Sur, Maguindanao, North and South Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and indigenous communities. They are high school graduates with a grade of at least 80% in science and mathematics.

According to Dr. Ester B. Ogena, Director of the Science Education Institute (SEI), "the GREAT-M scholarship program is a project of the DOST through the SEI aimed at improving the quality of life of Muslim youths and indigenous communities and enabling them to contribute positively to national development." She stated further, "this is a significant step towards addressing issues of equity and access to educational opportunities."

As incentives, the qualifiers will receive tuition fees and other school fees, book, transportation and uniform allowances; monthly living allowances and group health insurance, among others.

The qualifiers will be notified about the scholarship award and will be advised to report together with a parent or guardian to the DOST XII or ARMM Regional Offices. They should bring the following requirements: accompanying parent's 2005 Community Tax Certificate and remuneration fee.

The names of three potential qualifiers were withheld subject to further evaluation of required documents.

Republic of the Philippines
Department of Science and Technology
Science Education Institute

Shaping the Future Now

Qualifiers to the 2005 Grants for Educational Assistance on Technology and Science Teaching Courses in Mindanao (Project GREAT-M)

Science and Mathematics Teaching

ALIM, JOSHAMIN A.
BORAMBING, RAMINA O.
ESCO, SOLAIMAN G.
GUIAMIL, DATU BARANZIL A.
KUSAIN, SITTIE JEYURRY K.
LAMPUKAN, MUSA A.
LAYUGIN, ABDULRAJAK I.
MALICDEM, ABUL KHAYR S.
PATADON, EVERLY G.
SAIDON, FAISAL N.
SALIKALA, AL-SHARIF K.
TALIB, ABDULMOJAIMON H.

Technical Course

ABSARANI, JOHNNY B.
AGAO, NORHANA K.
ANARATIN, SANDA G.
ANGGOTO, YUNOS K.
ANGKAD, MORAINIE P.
ANGKANAN, INDIRA S.
CUNIT, JAZEL MAL P.
EMAN, NOR-EN S.
FERNANDO, ROGELIO L.
GETUYA, JENNIFER C.
GUIBAN, REYCIALYN M.
JALAUDI, ALKHAYER A.
LALIMAN, JALALYN RAIMONDPONG M.
LU, NORODIN DANIEL B.
MACIMOD, LARRY G.
MALATIA, JERSEY S.
MAMA, RAHIPA M.
PANOY, ELIZABETH B.
PENDATUN, MAURED T.
SANOH, BERSHIRA T.
SERGIO, SAMIRA A.

The same list is also available at the website www.science-scholarships.ph

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ibarra

Iraq rebels mount new wave of attacks

BAGHDAD, IRAQ—THREE LABORERS WAITING FOR day jobs in east Baghdad were killed and a dozen wounded early Friday in a drive-by shooting, police said. Elsewhere, an insurgent bomb killed three policemen, and the mayor of a town south of the capital was assassinated after rebels killed his four bodyguards.

The attack in Baghdad, which occurred in the New Baghdad district at a spot where laborers gather each morning looking for day jobs—followed a day of mayhem in the capital on Thursday when suicide bombers killed at least 11 people in two attacks that targeted Iraqi police.

On Wednesday more than a dozen bombings ripped through the city, killing 167 people and wounding about 570. Many of the victims also were day laborers lured by a cash-in-another-pocket tip to an employer.

US officials said the bombings on Tuesday were likely an effort by the Sunni Arab–dominated insurgency to respond to the Iraqi army's successful offensive in the northern city of Tal Afar and to undermine the Oct. 15 referendum on Iraq's new constitution.

"These spikes of violence are predictably around certain critical events that highlight the progress of democracy," said Maj. Gen. Rick Lynch, the chief American military spokesperson.

Coalition forces said they killed nine insurgents when they launched an air strike on the town of Ramadiah, about 120 kilometers west of Baghdad.

The attack on Thursday night destroyed an abandoned school the US military said was being used by al-Qaeda in Iraq militants to carry out attacks against Iraqi police and coalition forces.

"In the time of the strike, terrorists were also observed firing mortars outside the building," the statement said, adding that the attack was "timed and executed in a manner to reduce the possibility of collateral damage."

Iraq and US officials say the fight on attack across the porous border with Syria and have accused the Damascus government of doing little to stop the influx, a charge Syria has repeatedly rejected.

US forces have waged repeated campaigns against militants in al-Anbar province, each time declaring victory only to see the enemy and strife in the so-called Sunni Triangle again come under insurgent control.

The military also said a US Marine was killed in the province on Thursday in an "indirect fire explosion" near the city of Ramadi in al-Anbar province.

Closer to Baghdad, a parked car bomb devastated areas an Iraqi police patrol in the town of Fatora, killing three officers and wounding four police, Capt. Muthana Khalid said.

And in the Iskandariya district, 50 kilometers south of Baghdad, gunmen broke into the home of the local mayor and shot him dead, after first killing his four bodyguards, police Capt. Khaleem Khalid said.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq, headed by Jordanian terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, claimed responsibility for the rampages of violence launched after an Iraqi-US force of 8,500 soldiers stormed Tal Afar, an insurgent bastion in the northwest, earlier this week.

Al-Zarqawi then outspokenly declared "all-out war" on Shiite Muslims. Iraqi troops and the government in what the United States has called a desperate propaganda campaign to derail the political process, including the upcoming referendum on the draft constitution.

Leaders of the Sunni Arab minority in Iraq have vowed to defeat the constitution, which they claim favors the Shiite majority and the Kurds.

Lynch said the joint force killed 149 insurgents and captured 261 in the second operation in a year to rid Tal Afar of militants, including foreign fighters returning from Syria.

Now, he said, US forces along with the Iraqi army fighting to regain control of the Syrian border, near the western insurgent stronghold of Qaim—will to the south of Tal Afar.

"The focus is ... on remote control of the border and in this particular case the border with Syria," he said. "We believe that the terrorists and foreign fighters are coming from across the Syrian border, down the Euphrates River Valley into Baghdad."

As al-Qaeda in Iraq intensified its bombing and propaganda campaign, the government has made arrests.

Iraqi authorities have taken pains in recent days to convince the population that the insurgency is overwhelmingly foreign, claiming, for example, that they arrested a Palestinian and a Libyan in the Khamisiyah attack on Wednesday that left at least 168 dead. The bombing was a "blessing" for the government, said without detailing evidence.

The Americans have quietly contradicted this government line, saying the insurgency is only about 20 percent foreign.

The massive bombings took place with both Iraqi Prime Minister Jalal Talabani and Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari in the United States.

"Today, Iraq is being one of the most brutal campaigns of terror at the hands of the forces of darkness," Talabani said Thursday, addressing the UN General Assembly with an appeal for international help. AP

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World leaders demand greater role for UN at high-level summit

UNITED NATIONS—WORLD LEADERS meeting the end of a three-day summit urged the United Nations to play a bigger role on the world stage...to everything from the fight against terrorism to easing the crunch caused by high oil prices.

After the last speeches on Friday, the 170 UN members-many well-adapt a document that reduces step toward revamping the United Nations to meet the challenges of the 21st century and adds new impetus to helping 100 poor countries out of poverty. But Bible disagreements meant that many of its most ambitious measures had to be left out.

While those disagreements were playing out in the financial assembly chamber, attention was largely focused elsewhere. Every president said his country was willing to provide nuclear technology to other Muslim states. Arab-Israeli relations took another positive step after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza with a meeting between the foreign ministers of Israel and Qatar. And a UN treaty to fight global corruption got its 30th ratification, triggering its entry into force in 90 days.

Between news conferences Thursday by Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin and various nongovernmental organizations, Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez scolded US evangelist Pat Robertson for calling for his assassination and criticized the US government for the long war, which he called illegal.

Chavez suggested that the United Nations headquarters be moved to Jerusalem because President George W Bush attacked Saddam Hussein's government without UN authorization.

"The proposal for the search of providing a response to the conflict experienced by Palestine, but it may be difficult to bring about," Chavez said in a speech that caused him the hundred applause of the 96 leaders to speak so far.

If Chavez's fiery speech showed a distaste for the United States, it also showed his boldness for the United Nations, something many other leaders readily shared.

The president of the Philippines, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, went further than most when she suggested the United Nations take the lead in countering the effects of high oil prices. She said it should study oil rationing and conservation, as well as consider institutions to lend engines with coconut oil and convert their sugar to ethanol.

Chavez President Hu Jintao and Russia's President Vladimir Putin made clear they wanted the United Nations to help coordinate the fight against terrorism.

"The United Nations, as the core of the collective security mechanism, plays an irreplaceable role in international cooperation to ensure global security," Hu said. "Justice rule can only be strengthened and must never, any way be weakened."

Those demands highlighted that, while Washington and others avoid serious reform before the UN tackles new challenges, the United Nations' image is still strong in much of the world and some nations want it to take on more responsibility now.

Yet while many leaders extolled the world body, they also dwelt on their own diplomatic initiatives on key issues in the run-up to the summit, including UN Security Council reform and achieving eight goals to alleviate poverty and illness worldwide.

Leaders stressed repeatedly that more needs to be done to assist progress on the Millennium Development Goals, though major differences remained on what to do, and who should pay. AP

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N. Zealand election too close to call

POLLSBURTON—NEW ZEALAND Prime Minister Helen Clark and National opposition leader Don Brash embarked on a frenetic final day of campaigning on Friday before an election which opinion polls suggested was too close to call.

Polls over the past week have pointed to one of the closest ballots in the country's history, forcing candidates from the Labour-led government and National out on to the streets to eke out the last possible votes.

"It's very positive, but we're not leaving any stone unturned, every seat I have chasing votes right to the last minutes," Labour's Health Minister Annette King told Reuters.

A Herald/DigiPoll survey of 1,000 people published on Friday had Clark's centre-left government ahead with 44.6 percent support, compared with 37.4 percent for National.

Other polls and bookmakers have National ahead after voters turned their president Brash campaigned strongly on promises of improved law and order and to do battle with bureaucratic waste.

But Brash admitted during a debate with Clark on Thursday he might have to change "tax cuts details" of his NZ$9 billion ($6.4 billion) tax plan in order to cut out crucial coalition partners.

"That would take some of the wind out of the sails of the people who were voting almost purely on the tax issue," said neighbor Otago University political scientist Ray Miller, who described the election as "too difficult to call."

Clark appeared to score points over Brash in the televised debate after he admitted that he might scrap New Zealand's 20-year ban on nuclear ships in favor of achievable deal with the United States.

He said he would not change the popular anti-nuclear policy, a point of independence for New Zealand, without a referendum.

"The possibility of a referendum would be enough to scare a lot of New Zealanders," Miller told Reuters.

The policy has resonated with New Zealanders since it was introduced by Labour in 1985, the year French agents blew up the Greenpeace anti-nuclear flagship Rainbow Warrior in Auckland harbor, killing one crew member.

The policy caused a decade-long diplomatic rift with the United States.

Both sides underlined in the last round New Zealand's three largest cities of Auckland, Christchurch and the capital Wellington on Friday.

"I believe there's at least a reasonable prospect that National could form a government after the election if we can be the largest of the two parties on the night," he told Reuters.

A final updated Reuters survey of the four leading polls showed Labour ahead with 41.3 percent, exactly the same percentage of the vote it won when it was swamped in power in the 2002 election.

National was on 38.1 percent, still up from the 20.9 percent of the vote it won in 2002. But at the expense of minor parties such as the right-wing ACT which would be expected to support the centre-right party in any coalition to form a government. Reuters

CLARK

More American women experimenting with same sex encounters, says poll

CHICAGO—MORE AMERICAN women—particularly those in their late teens and 20s—are experimenting with bisexuality or at least brief, more unadventurous sexual encounters, according to a news report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The survey released Thursday by the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics, found that 11.5 percent of women, ages 18 to 44, said they've had at least one sexual experience with another woman in their lifetimes, compared with about 4 percent of women, ages 18 to 59, who said the same in a comparable survey a decade earlier.

For women in their late teens and 20s, the percentage rose to 14 percent in the more recent survey. About 6 percent of men in their teens and 20s said they'd had at least one same-sex encounter.

While those who conducted the survey took measures to protect respondents' privacy, researchers say it's unclear whether the figure for men was lower because they're less likely to avoid same-sex experiences or whether they're not reporting them.

It wouldn't surprise Sue Fowler, a 27-year-old art student who dates both women and men, if more were not likely to talk about their experiences.

"There's a certain higher level of discrimination (for men). It's a lot easier for women to have these kinds of experiences and be open about it because it's more accepted," said Fowler, who attends the University of Florida.

The findings on bisexuality and other aspects of Americans' sexual habits were taken from the National Survey of Family Growth, which included 12,571 in-person interviews done from March 2002 to March 2003. Overall, researchers said the report shows that most people have relatively few partners and use sex a low risk for sexually transmitted diseases.

"Instead of just anecdotes and stories that make people's stomachs, I think it's best to have real numbers," said William Mosher, the statistician who oversaw the report. "And now we have those."

When it comes to women and same-sex relationships, Mosher said it would be worth studying why young women seek such relationships, and whether they may be trying to avoid diseases most common in sexual through sex with men.

But some experts take study results at face value. It's even more likely that many college students simply are underestimating in spite of passage.

"It's very safe in the academic community, on our campus anything of it," said Eleanor Maguire, a professor of American studies at the University of Buffalo who has written about sexuality.

"But in some rural [areas] there's more talk than action," she added, noting that the bisexuality label has become a "badge of courage" for some college women, even those who only dabble. Meanwhile, she said, men who have same-sex experiences are often less likely to talk about it publicly. AP

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Bush pleads guilty for disarray after Katrina

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA—PRESident George W. Bush again took the blame for the government's flawed response to Hurricane Katrina on Thursday but promised one of the biggest rebuilding efforts the world has ever seen in the disaster zone.

As the US leader promised a drastic salary review for every US city, the New Orleans mayor said residents could start returning to the stricken city this weekend.

"The system, at every level of government, was just well coordinated, and was overwhelmed in the first few days," Bush said in a prime-time speech to the nation from Jackson Square in New Orleans' historic French Quarter.

Setting out a recovery plan from the destructive Aug. 29 storm for which the death toll reached 792 on Thursday, Bush said: "Four years after the frightening experience of Sept. 11, Americans have every right to expect a more effective response in a time of emergency.

"When the federal government fails to meet such an obligation, I as president am responsible for the problems, and for the solution."

Bush ordered a sweeping review of disaster-response plans in every major US city. "I consider detailed emergency planning to be a national security priority," Bush said.

The president gave no detail how much on top of the $62 billion allotted by Congress, but vowed: "The work that has begun in the Gulf Coast region will be one of the largest reconstruction efforts the world has ever seen."

Amid criticism of the treatment of New Orleans' poor blacks who made up the majority of the tens of thousands stranded in the city, Bush made a point of emphasizing that special help had to be given to African-Americans in the rebuilding.

"It's a good day in New Orleans," the mayor declared in an upbeat mood. "The sun is shining. We're bringing New Orleans back."

Bush was back in the region for the fourth time since the storm, as his popularity plumbed new lows, to make his proposals to rebuild the disaster zone across Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi.

Katrina has further damaged the US president's standing, already hit by the Iraq war.

A Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll released Thursday showed that just 40 percent of those interviewed approved of his overall performance as president, the lowest level since he took office in January 2001. Nearly 60 percent said they were unhappy with the Bush administration's response to Hurricane Katrina.

Louisiana officials added $4 to the state's toll taking it to 558 dead. In addition three have been 238 deaths in Mississippi, two in Alabama and 14 in Florida.

Nagin unusual Wednesday that more hideous discoveries will come out of the search of abandoned houses in the flooded city.

Louisiana Attorney General Charles Foti has pressed negligent homicide charges against two nurses of a New Orleans nursing home, where the bodies of 34 people were found.

Another grim find of 45 corpses was made on Sunday at a New Orleans hospital and a special task force has been set up to investigate some of the deaths reported.

While New Orleans made faltering steps toward recovery, Hurricane Ophelia, the storm of the hurricane season, inflicted floods and power cuts on about 150,000 people in North Carolina on the Atlantic coat. AFP

TEN-YEAR-OLD Conrad Barrus stands in the winds from Hurricane Ophelia in Buxton, N.C., Sept. 15. AP/TAG HOWER FREEPRESS TOM HOWARTON

Ophelia drenches N. Carolina

NAGS HEAD, NORTH CAROLINA—THE weak-paced Ophelia, downgraded from hurricane to tropical storm, moved out to sea early Friday after a three-day drenching that was far less severe than many had anticipated.

United residents in the south, where the storm's gusty wind ripped apart businesses and damaged homes, were hit harder.

"It just beat us and beat us and beat us," said Laurie Gomez, whose husband's restaurant was severely damaged at Salter Path on Bogue Banks, south of the Outer Banks.

While the storm's center was expected to stay just off shore, the ring of high wind surrounding the eye could remain over the Outer Banks until midday Friday, the National Hurricane Center said.

Gov. Mike Easley said gauging the scope of the damage was difficult because of the storm's slow path. Rain affecting the state's southeastern coast on Sunday was also crawling north and east Wednesday and Thursday.

"It's almost like nothing there different storms," Easley said.

Ophelia was downgraded to a tropical storm and its sustained winds dropped to 105 kph, the hurricane center said early Friday.

More than 12,000 homes and businesses remained without power late Thursday in eastern North Carolina, utilities said, down from a high of more than 200,000 overnight. But the mainland hasn't seen the severe flooding many feared would devastate the coastal interior.

"I've been coming down here for 35 years—this is nothing," said Tim Bilbo, 55, of Chicago, who stopped by a marina in Manteo to check out the waters of Roanoke Sound.

A moment later, a jogger plodded by along the docks, seemingly oblivious to the hurricane swirling off the coast.

Some decided to take advantage of the cleansing and vacation a little bit.

David Goddard, 58, of Ashburn, Virginia, stood on the beach in Nags Head, watching his 11-year-old son Josh wade into the foamy waters up to his calves.

"He's fearless," Goddard said with a grin.

The storm was blamed for one traffic death. Earlier, a tanker disappeared in rough waters off the coast of South Carolina.

On the Outer Banks, Dare County officials said Hatteras Island reported gusts to 121 kph. Other than power outages, the island was in pretty good shape, county spokesperson Sharon Sullivan said.

Storm water was not expected to wash over the islands, although coastal storm surge flooding of 1.2-1.6 meters above normal tide was expected, along with large and battering waves. AP

Once unimaginable: Foreign aid to US

JACKSONVILLE, ARKANSAS—BABY FOOD from Israel. Blankets from Egypt and India. Tents from Russia. Tinned cubed supplies sent via Denmark. Generators from China. Rice from Thailand. Bottled water and detergent from Taiwan.

The Little Rock Air Force Base has become the US clearinghouse for an extraordinary international outpouring of relief supplies for Hurricane Katrina's victims.

The hub presents a once-unimaginable spectacle: the richest, most powerful country in the world receiving foreign aid.

The relief supplies are flown into Jacksonville by the various countries. From there, the goods are unloaded by Air Force personnel, catalogued, warehoused and then dispatched by courier trailer to the places along the battered Gulf Coast that need them. The Federal Emergency Management Agency decides what goes where and when.

The work is being coordinated by Chris Hocke, a logistics expert at UPS, International, the overnight delivery service. UPS was hired by the US government.

Six months ago, Hocke was in Sri Lanka in order after the Asian tsunami killed thousands and left thousands more homeless.

Sri Lanka and Little Rock "are definitely different, but the climate is not that different, the products coming to us are not that different, and some of the logistical issues are really quite similar," Hocke said.

"That is the tsunami situation, though. It's usually the US sending out to developing countries," Hocke said.

The Little Rock base is home to the 314th Airlift Wing and was selected as the nation's depot for international aid because it is relatively close to the Gulf Coast disaster zones—483 kilometers away—but far enough away to have escaped damage from the storm.

FEMA put out a list of what items were needed in the disaster zone, and foreign countries responded according to what they could offer.

On a recent day, an Israeli cargo jet arrived followed by Egyptian and Bavarian planes on the same tarmac, all unloading hundreds of tons of food, tarpaulins, baby formula, tents and other items. Flights were scheduled to arrive this week from Peru, Finland, Romania, Chile, South Korea, Luxembourg, Slovenia and Greece.

"We've been working a lot of hours, but it's worth it to be part of something this big, this important," Air Force Lt. Jon Quinlan said. AP

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Fourth Indonesian dies from bird flu

JAKARTA—INDONESIA ON FRIDAY confirmed its fourth death from bird flu as international concern continues that the virus could mutate into a major killer.

Health officials said tests showed that a woman who died last week in Jakarta was infected with the virus.

The woman, 37, died at a private hospital in South Jakarta Saturday evening after being admitted on Sept. 5 in a serious condition.

"Yes it's confirmed," Health Minister Siti Fadilah Supari told AFP after declined to give further details.

Blood samples had been sent to Hong Kong for testing.

The latest death brought to 53 the number of people in Southeast Asia known to have died from the deadly H5N1 strain of the virus since 2003. Indonesia now has the same number of reported bird flu deaths as Cambodia. Vietnam has recorded 43 and Thailand 12.

Health ministry spokesperson Sitinadia told AFP that officials still did not know how the latest victim became infected. They were continuing to investigate and monitor the health of people she had contact with, Sitinadia said.

Supari said blood samples had been taken from people known to have contact with the deceased.

One of them was suspected to have been infected but remained healthy, she said, declining to give details.

The minister said health officials had not found any indications that the virus had undergone a mutation that would allow human-to-human transmission.

"We are doing lab tests to determine whether there has been a change in the pattern of transmission but so far that's not the case," she said.

Supari has said the victim's work involved "taking care of local chicken domestics."

An stallion and his two young daughters died in suburban Jakarta in July. The government said infected chicken droppings were suspected to have caused those deaths.

Jakarta launched a massive vaccination drive against the disease but has been criticized for carrying out only limited culls.

The World Health Organization (WHO) requires that poultry within a radius of 3 kilometers from any bird flu outbreak be killed.

Steven Bjorge, a medical officer with the WHO in Indonesia, said earlier in the week that culling was "very complicated" in Indonesia as statistics suggested 70 to 80 percent of about 1.2 billion chickens in the country were backyard birds.

"The notion that we can easily cull ... is almost impossible to implement at this moment," Bjorge said.

WHO chief Lee Jong-wook hinted a new warning about avian flu on Thursday, reiterating that the virus could mutate into a major killer.

At present, the H5N1 strain of bird flu, harbored by wild migrating birds and poultry flocks, is lethal for humans but is not very contagious, nor can it be easily transmitted from person to person.

The WHO's biggest fear is that H5N1 may mutate, acquiring genes from the human influenza virus that would make it highly infectious as well as lethal.

US President George W. Bush and French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin, speaking at the UN General Assembly on Wednesday, called for international mobilization against avian influenza, which has already resulted in the cull of millions of chickens along with the human deaths in Southeast Asia.

"If left unchallenged, this virus could become the first pandemic of the 21st century," Bush said.

US Health Secretary Mike Leavitt said Thursday he would next month lead a delegation to Southeast Asia, where half of the 112 people affected by the disease had died, for talks with government leaders to seek "their critical involvement and personal commitment to preparedness and response." AFP

WANG

Asia's richest woman wins battle for late hubby's empire

HONG KONG—ASIA'S RICHEST WOMAN ON Friday won an eight-year legal battle with her father-in-law for control of her dead husband's multibillion-dollar real estate empire.

Nina Wang, a flamboyant businesswoman known for her colorful wardrobe and tainted fortune, won a unanimous ruling from Hong Kong's five-member Court of Final Appeal granting her the $3.5-billion Chinachem conglomerate.

The judges overturned a lower court judgment that she had forged the will of her late husband, Teddy Wang Yeh-Tsai, shortly before he was kidnapped in 1990 and vanished without a trace.

They ruled there was no real cause for suspicion that the document was a fake, as her 98-year-old father-in-law Wang Din-shih had claimed throughout the eight-year legal saga.

The case featured all the stuff of TV melodrama, with kidnappings, allegations of infidelity and mystery attacks, that kept the story of the latter family dispute bubbling on the front pages of Hong Kong's newspapers.

Teddy Wang was kidnapped in 1990 but although the family paid $60 million in ransom, he was never seen again. His body was never found, and he was legally declared dead nine years later.

Nina Wang had long insisted her husband was still alive and would someday return to her.

The case turned on one key issue, whether the 1990 will naming her as the sole beneficiary was a forgery.

Two other wills were presented in court. The earliest, dated 1960, split the estate equally between Teddy's father and his wife.

A 1968 version, whose authenticity was challenged and which was allegedly made after Teddy discovered his wife was having an affair, gave the entire estate to his father.

In Friday's ruling, the appeal court dismissed the lower court's stipulation of Wang's behavior and the finding that the 1990 will was forged.

One of the judges, Lord Scott of Foscote, said Wang's conduct since 1990 had been consistent with "a distraught lady whose husband had suffered an unknown fate."

"I would have been more condemnatory about a father-in-law," who remained outwardly friendly with Wang while filing aggressive legal proceedings accusing her of fraud, the judge said.

"We are obviously delighted with the verdict. Mrs. Wang is happy. Her initial reaction was relief," Wang's lawyer Brian Gilchrist told reporters outside court.

Neither Wang, 56, nor her father-in-law were in court for the judgment.

Wang Din-shih's lawyer, Albert Yeung, said: "I'm deeply disappointed and very surprised. It's the end of the road as far as Hong Kong litigation is concerned."

In January this year, Wang was formally charged with forgery but released on bail of HK$5 million ($0.7 million), the largest bail in city history. AFP

INQUIRER

OPINION

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Playing catch-up

EDITORIAL

SO YOU WANT TO SET UP A BUSINESS IN THE Philippines? Then be prepared to hurdle what could possibly be one of the toughest and longest obstacle courses invented by man.

According to a recent study done by the World Bank and the International Finance Corp., its private sector development arm, a would-be entrepreneur must take a total of 21 steps—mostly securing licenses and business permits—before he can open a business in this country. And if that list of requirements is longer than the East Asia Pacific average of 17 steps, naturally the time they take to accomplish them is also much longer: 197 days compared to the regional average of 153 days.

Still interested? Then consider the profits you can actually put into your pocket. If yours is a small- or medium-scale enterprise, you have to share 40.4 percent of your gross profit with the government in the form of taxes and fees. (And that doesn't include per-the-increase-in-the-corporate-income-tax rate to 35 percent from 32 percent that forms part of the new expanded value-added tax which has not been implemented yet.) That tax take ranks way up there among the highest in the region where the average is only 31.2 percent.

Of course, there's a way to make a bigger pile. You can bribe your way around so you can get huge reductions in the taxes and fees you pay or simply just evade payment and hope you don't get caught. Such practices are hotly common in some of the poorest countries since the high tax rates and fees they impose make evasion more tempting and rewarding. In the Philippines, because of tax evasion and corruption tax collections have been lagging far behind government expenditures, raising the country's total deficit to nearly unmanageable proportions.

The huge tax hike, the numerous requirements and the red tape are the major contributing factors that put the Philippines way down on No. 135 in a ranking of 155 countries based on the ease of doing business. But these are not the only reasons foreign investors are not rushing to put their money in the country. A separate study done by the Asian Development Bank shows the risks of doing business in the country have risen sharply since the 1997 Asian financial crisis. The higher risks have been brought about by chronic government budget deficits, the growing influence of vested interests in Congress and the judiciary and the government's inability to create a level playing field. The high cost of power and labor are also "key factors" that make it difficult to do business here, the ADB report said.

All these negative factors have contributed to a drastic fall in investments, particularly foreign investments. The ADB noted that gross domestic investment fell to 18.3 percent of the gross national product in 2002 from 23.0 percent in 1998. Foreign direct investments, on the other hand, sharply declined from $2.1 billion in 1999 to only $130 million in 2003.

We foreign investors, the perceived risks of doing business in the Philippines are rising, encouraging them to seek alternative investment destinations," the ADB noted.

This year, however, there seems to be a sharp reversal in the downward trend of foreign investments. During the first semester, according to the Bangko Sentral, foreign direct investments surged to $695 million, almost three times the investments made in the same period last year.

Still, what the country is getting are mere trickles compared to the amounts pouring to neighboring countries. Last year, for instance, foreign investors poured $1.7 billion into Vietnam, $2 billion into Malaysia, $5 billion into Singapore and $61 billion into China.

Obviously, we have a lot of catching up to do. But getting more foreign investments cannot just be wished. The recent studies done by two international financial institutions clearly identify the areas where reforms are most needed to lessen the risks to investors and make investing in the Philippines more attractive to foreign companies. Some may be very difficult to manage, like lowering labor and power costs. But there are others that can be done with some remedial legislation and, more importantly, lots of political will—cutting red tape, plugging tax loopholes and stopping corruption, for instance.

But can a wounded presidency and an administration desperately trying to survive still summon the will or even have the energy left to do even the most obvious reforms? President Macapagal-Arroyo's recent decisions, particularly her latest appointments, offer little hope that her administration will do more than just muddle through in the weeks and months ahead.

An irreverent imposture

SEPARATE OPINION

Dagupan S. Cruz

MANY PEOPLE MAY BE WONDERING WHY the impeachment movement did not succeed despite the various complaints filed against President Macapagal-Arroyo (the president's demolition) she committed during the period of amnesty in her favor. Below are some possible reasons, generally known or simply suggested, some of them innocent and others decidedly not.

The first is that there were many people who were unduly pro-Gloria regardless of the pros and cons of the impeachment complaints. They didn't care or know what the issues were and were concerned only that their idol was being attacked and had to be protected at any cost. She was being harassed and prevented from doing her important work as President of the Philippines. The favorite daughter of Pampanga and then guided countryman in Lubao deserved their continuing support as head followers of the Sto. Niño de Tondo. And, by consequence, his political heirs.

The second is that the members of the Rainbow Coalition of Speaker Jose de Venecia, whose dreaming of becoming prime minister of the Constitution is unresolved, believed that their political future would be secured if La Gloria was protected against the pro-impeachers and also be able to unseat their Speaker's conditional ambition. Moreover, some of them belong to GMA's own political party, whatever it is now, and to his duty-bound to follow her be sent as in the children's game of follow-the-leader. The allegiance of these legislators was dictated by party discipline which they obediently allowed to override their conscience.

There were others who refused to toe the line, and due to where the votes became tougher. Faced with rebellion in the ranks, the party leaders employed the carrot-and-stick approach to whip them into obedience. The stick involved the generally effective but regrettable resource to threats or violence.

Those who originally resisted were intimidated with early release of their pork barrel allocations or special accommodations like the reduction of the purchase price of lots for a socialized housing project in the presidential area of the prohibition against the importation of used cars in favor of those in another representative. Some would include here the increased bonanza given to all GMA loyalists amounting to millions of pesos from the public coffers. There were also appointments of their relatives as ambassadors and board directors that were offered or threatened to be withdrawn depending on their loyalty or lack of it to Malacañang.

The media also had a field day among other ego-uptight members who were amply rewarded for every hint of approval for the besieged Presidente. Editorial writers, columnists, reporters, television and radio announcers enjoyed Christmas in September by commensurating their convictions. Some say that favorable headlines and feature stories for GMA were granted generous honoraria, television stations with spouses and other relatives residing in the province of the President's hometown let us at least hold their penalties for the sake of their captive families.

Enjoy some of the above discussed items. Some of the administration claque to enjoy the fruits of their loyalty is the Mendiola during the current recess. More than 50 of them have already flown as New York on "official business" to watch her parade at the Security Council. Their pocketmits include hefty dollar allowances, perhaps not even specially reserved, and lodgings at several hotels like the Hilton at government expense.

There were those independent opposition stars who vowed in their conscience and external court judgment advised them to abstain hope or fear of a pork pipe line. They succinctly believed that the foreign agitated President, for no even more intervention of the opposition aimed to remove them in power at this core of the nation's welfare. The latter hopes were edited to place GMA's ex-bad habits in the past and to hail into time proved. The opposition against her had been disenchanted, befriended, and even the bishops had given up.

Others may not have been similarly convinced but voted for her just the same because they felt that the alternative was worse. The evidence against her sounded convincing, impeaching and so moving her from office might be like jumping from the frying pan into the fire. The fire would be Noli de Castro. The Vice President is a down-to-earth person, an unexpected forerunner of his limited academic preparation and political experience. Moreover, he would be a stooge under the control of his Lapiz Senate or ABS-CBN where he is still a paid employee. Ms Arroyo might be a dictatress but there found Ito Cuneta swaddles to compromise.

The least literates of the former administration have described the vote of the 158 opponents of the impeachment movement as the votes of the people, which is the voice of God. The majority of the people, they describe their quantitative members of the House of Representatives as speaking for the Almighty is a complete proposition and an irreverent imposture. There questionable counters in their phrases seem to begin it, makes their votes virtually sacred. Perhaps made like for statistic.

Troubling questions on Aquino case

GET REAL

Sulfide Collao-Hontanosas

LEPANTO MICHAEL FAT AQUINO IS FAKO. asking because it raises so many questions, the answers to some of which have to provide explanations that will be satisfactory to some very important government functionaries and individuals. These functionaries will be relevant in a situation where the need to strengthen all government institutions is constantly being emphasized, and where consistency is a distinguishing trait.

The first set of questions have to do with the bizarre and curious unusual-level public officials who, according to the PSI charges, were the recipients of the circulated ("secret") information that were downloaded from the PSI computers by to engineers Leandro Aragoncillo and passed on to Aquino (whose an-known, per one newspaper report, is "Mario"—good grief).

It is amusing that although these same officials are said to be identified by the PSI sometime next week, already five—two former national officials—former President Joseph Estrada and former Sen. Francisco "Kit" Tatad and three current ones (Sen. Panfilo Lacson, Sen. Aquilino "Koko" Pimentel Jr. and Rep. Sonia Gonzalez)—have stood up to be recognized, or rats, more than the PSI number. Which of these, if any, will be the ones identified next week, we still do not know. But at least the three current national public officials have "acknowledged" (a term from the word "admitted" is not used) that they received e-mail communications from either Aquino or Aragoncillo or both, although they deserve the importance of these subjects matter.

Questions, nevertheless, arise. First, Michael Fat Aquino left (some would say exiled) here) the Philippines some time in 2001, when he was holding a senior position in the Philippine National Police. He came back apparently some months ago (or was re-called to the Kamang Bahayang Museum), but in regard to the murders of publicists Bubby Dacer and his driver Emmanuel Corbito. The people he contacted are also government officials and know that the government, or at least the PNP, must have been looking for him to help bureaus be left without official interest. So did these officials then the PNP that Aquino had resulted from such them? If not, why not? And how so have rumored Aquino that he chose to re-call to his agency of his whereabouts and explain his sudden disappearance? If not, why not? More they talking and allowing someone who was making bids of his whereabouts, or was it a figure to judgment on these parts?

And what about the names of the corporations that they received? Did they know the source, or at least suspect where to come from, given the position of responsible with the PNP? As government officials, do not officials, if not legal, considerations require that they either tell their sources to cease and desist from breaking the LAW law, or at least turn over the information they receive to appropriate Philippine government authorities? Didn't they care what laws were being broken, or was it another lapse in judgment on their part?

Then there is a second set of questions, that may addressed to the PNP Exactly what is the status of Michael Fat Aquino? Where he left the Philippines, if you recall, he was on active duty as a senior officer in that agency. Is he now considered AWOL? If he is, how long can one stay AWOL without being automatically dismissed from the service for desertion of duty?

When Aquino was arrested in March this year by US immigration authorities, it made the local newspapers. Did the PNP attempt to get in touch with Aquino, to comment him back to explain his absence or their cause why he should not be sanctioned? If not, why not?

Miscellaneous questions: Is it true that even after Aquino has a valid Philippine passport, which he had recently renewed, insisting that the more that he left the country using a false passport was wrong. But if he was using a valid passport, why also using a false being a passport? Are employees of 21 should know as a 10 books (can one), he had to obtain permission from his head of agency to leave the country. And if he obtained permission, does means the PNP knew where he was going. Why then did the PNP choose to leave him to his completely unaware by his disappearance?

Of course, it could be that the PNP really did not know anything—in which case, the only way Aquino could have left the country would be by use of fraudulent documents allowed him to leave without proper documentation (the proper showing authorization from his boss or so-on), which of course puts the spotlight on the PNP.

And while we're at it, there's a question that has to be addressed to the Department of Foreign Affairs. While there seems to have been no legal impediment to renewing Aquino's passport, the DFA must have been aware of the seriousness of the charges being made against him. What was the advantage to inform the PNP that a senior official whom they presumably were trying to locate had been in his country?

But the most disturbing question is reserved for the Supreme Court. On information to that the Supreme Court has requested the OSG to look into the case, Aquino's attorneys and even lawyers have petitioned the SC to issue a temporary restraining order (TRO) that would prevent him (and presumably his co-accused) from being re-turned to the District insular—Aquino. That was last week, in the afternoon, and it is fortunately presumed the SC from filing extraordinary changes as the United States. Therefore, How long is the Supreme Court going to sit on that TRO? It's been four years, after all!

An intriguing connection?

PROMINENT OPPOSITION FIGURES are now being called the most vocal people to explain the series of recent changes between them and Palgma's mother Rep. Agusino and FBI employee Leandro Mercadillo, who were both arrested recently in the United States allegedly for espionage against the US government. Agusino was one of the main points of them and those sides of Sen. Panfilo Lacson when he was still chief of the President's Anti-Organized Crime Task Force and is also tied to the Senate where the harrowing hearing exploded into a full-blown multiple murder and robbery case. Agusino's name came up frequently during the Senate hearings four years ago on the ANGLO's involvement activities, where many "Boodlers" (big and several other witnesses testified.

* * *

When the current worry broke out about the arrest of Agusino and Mercadillo and the implications of several top Filipino opposition leaders with them, one of them asserted that all he got from Agusino was a greeting card on his birthday. Another said that he got a call from Agusino while he was currently under a person a greeting card.

It would be interesting to see how this espionage case will play out. A political pundit who has been following the case closely said the exchange of communications between the US-based duo and the Pinoy politicos traces back to September last year. He expressed the popular theory going around that the arrest of the two US-based Filipinos could be all about the grand conspiracy against GMA that exploded last June with the sudden appearance of the deposed Garci tapes. It would be a spy thriller worthy of Hollywood.

* * *

Last July the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines gave GMA the benefit of the doubt until the opposition's allegation that she had cheated her way to victory in the May 2004 elections. Last week, the CBCP's permanent council declared that there were no reasons to reverse that stand, although it said the search for truth must continue. Many of the bishops are convinced that GMA cheated, but Encarnacion maintains by that action to examine the search for truth, the Parish Pastoral Council on Responsible Voting (PPCRV) has asked the Commission on Elections to open the ballots to the May 2004 election.

I can see in this move the influence of retired Bishop Teodoro Bacani, who has been openly against GMA, and Cardinal Jaime Sin, who, before he died, was behind the PPCRV in the last elections. The PPCRV could obviously follow the opposition line that there is proof of election fraud in the tampered Garci tapes. But the problem is that this goes against the reports of leaders of the religious movement last May 2004, which said the elections were generally peaceful, honest and credible in their respective areas. The PPCRV got no such reports. In fact, based on the basis of the CBCP's statement that the elections were honest and credible nationwide.

* * *

The opposition's other top line reasons for its failure to capture the 70 votes to send the impeachment complaint against GMA to the Senate. The most convincing was no action but of the GMA administration's economic performance as projects to distribute the cache was completed. If in fact an important backbone of the number of politicians is reported to its administration all over the world, not the least the United States, how much more for a Presidency fighting for her political life? But having persuasively known many of the House members from way back when they were starting their political careers, GMA could have put her full figured this much among the reluctant lawmakers who are virtual kingpins in their own turf, the hope is worked among the neophytes, the other factors counted the opposition's defeat.

* * *

But there was the political blunder by the opposition committed: it had relied either on either ruling to oust GMA, following what it thought was her certain downfall was July 8. But her respondent to their call not instead, GMA counted on support with the help of key allies, including President Fidel Ramos, Speaker Jose de Venecia, majority of the Lakas, LP, NP and NPC congressmen, and key governors and mayors. Seeing in the street protests, the opposition filed its amended complaint in the House, but Oliver Lozano's complaint was already there a month ahead. The opposition had only one complaint to be entertained in one year under the Constitution was inconsistently signed in the House, but in the end the majority of the lawmakers agreed as well as the thinking screened victory.

* * *

The fact that the opposition filed an "amended" complaint showed that it is wrong, stated the one-year bar despite the efforts of some administration congressmen to argue to the contrary. What happened was that when the opposition realized the Lozano complaint was likely to be upheld, following GMA's state of the nation's address, it filed an "amended" complaint to piggyback to "amended" complaint.

Another mistake was that they packed their complaint with so many unrelated issues against GMA, such as the North Rail and Subic-Clark projects, human rights violations and the "invisible" properties abroad, which did not link GMA directly to what had been exposed in the Garci scam. It is hard to understand why the brilliant minds in the opposition prepared what blocked Rep. Teddyboy Locsin called a "mess itself, mine" complaint.

* * *

There, in Mendiolaspeng Rep. Jim Hat Ateneo, who defended Rep. Bedimir Maravilles against attacks that his endorsement of the jueteng contractor proved him to be a jueteng lord, has pointed out during the plenary voting, the opposition voted to seize the draft rules for the 13th Congress in favor of the rules adopted during the 11th Congress under the late Speaker Jose de Venecia's impeachment. Fascinating opted for the reservation, the two complaints could have been consolidated, and thanks. Rules were tapping problems, quipped, he added. (Victor membrano?)

Question of funding

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

for accepting donations from foreign sources.

These NGOs, particularly those once headed by former Social Welfare Secretary Dinky Soliman and former Peace Adviser Ging Deles, have been criticized for relying on foreign funding instructions and foundations to carry out projects. Because many NGO projects have either direct political purposes or are adversary in nature to which government has been either neglectful or indifferent, the use of foreign funds, it is implied, is sometimes unwarranted.

**And yet there is a reason these funds have gone to mangyan income groups. Foreign NGOs understandably are more comfortable providing funds to those groups whose political views are sponsorable, who have credentials of resistance or adversary in issues in

Put people back in the picture

IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT THE national focus at present is only on big events, such as the Garci tapes, jueteng graft, impeachments, Charter change, and on the power wielders, such as Fidel Ramos and Joseph Estrada.

Where are the people in the picture? A democracy such as ours is premised on the thesis that it is the people who rule. But where is the discussion on reforms and survival scenarios? Sadly, some members of the media equivalent of cannibals and scandals, so they believe also a party in the act of exacting the people in the process dictated.

As for the peasants, they are united in calling for Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's ouster. Aside from rigging the elections, GMA has not acted on farmers' issues. She is consistently pushing for the passage of the Farmland as Collateral bill, which on the surface seems to spur countryside growth and development but in reality will result in the agrarian reform gains because it is directly endangered to allow the accumulation of farmlands. Aside from appointing anti-farmer agrarian reform secretaries, like Roberto Pagdanganan and Hernani Braganza, the government under GMA has also failed to use the recovered ill-gotten Marcos wealth judiciously.

The peasants have already drafted a post-GMA agenda. It includes the increase in land acquisition and distribution targets and accomplishments, protection of gains made under the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, and the fulfillment one of the farmers awards promised by GMA.

If our country's problems are only moronic, then we need deep-rooted reforms to address them. We cannot forget addressing our woes by concentrating all our attention on politicians and their issues. We need to focus when ordinary citizens, civil society groups and sectors have to say on improving our lives. Bring the people back in.

—EDEO CARCEL
member, Alliance para sa Pagsulong ng Kilusang Agraryo (Alliance for Agrarian Movement)
1 Kalabaw cor. Tamaraw St., Teachers' Village West, Diliman, Quezon City

Senator's sister qualified for CHED position

TO BE RIDDLED TO THE UNDERSIDE: Sept. 7 editorial, titled "Slow burn," which alleged that the "President employed strict standards in her disposal to ensure she vote she needed, including the power to appoint." Citing the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, the editorial proceeded to "name just a few: a.) a Senatus Sandiago, sister of Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago, was appointed commissioner of the Commission on Higher Education last Aug. 1."

First, you may be referring not to a certain Senatus Sandiago, but to Dr. Leticia Pedro Defensor, the sister of Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago, who was appointed to the CHED not on Aug. 1 as stated in the editorial, but in July of the current year.

To put additional color on the appointment of Defensor to her current post it is grossly disparaging her hard-earned credentials and impressive qualifications. Defensor holds a Ph.D. in Education from the Philippine Women's University, an MA in Guidance and Counseling from the Ateneo de Manila University, an MA in National Security Administration from the National Defense College of the Philippines, an MA in Child Study and Development, and a BS in Education from the West Visayas State University. She also took up post-doctoral studies in Counseling Psychology at the De La Salle University.

Defensor held teaching positions in the University of the Philippines College of Education, the PWU and Assumption College. She also served as dean of the Department of Psychology and acting dean of the Graduate School at the PWU.

Her appointment as CHED commissioner can be considered as a deserved countering the significant decrease in salary from her previous position as legislative staff head at the Commission on Appointments. Nevertheless, she accepted the President's invitation to join the CHED because she believes she can be a better public servant if she occupies a position in line with her area of expertise.

The Philippine National Association of Schools Inside Organization (Philnasio), the largest confederation of school administrators, has trusted Defensor's appointment. According to the group, considering that Defensor comes from both private and public schools, she can better oversee the problems confronting educational institutions in the tertiary level.

—BONIFACIO ENCARNA LEGASPI, media relations officer, Office of Sen. Alfredo Defensor Santiago, Room 18 Senate of the Philippines, Roxas Boulevard, Pasay City

Healthy vegan diet wards off diabetes

RESPONDING TO CHRISTIAN ESGUERRA for his article about the surge in new 2 diabetes cases in children, "I have reason not overlooking you diabetes," PDI, 8/26/2005.

There is a way to keep kids true active ward off diabetes is to feed them a healthy vegan diet. Animal products are loaded with fat and cholesterol which contributes to obesity, heart disease and other conditions that could lead to diabetes.

A recent study out of Simmons College and the Harvard School of Public Health in America found that the more red and processed meats people eat, the higher their risk of diabetes. Likewise, researchers from the University of Minnesota have found that the more saturated fat (i.e., meats and hamburgers) people eat, the more their level of fatty acids increase, and the more likely they will develop type-2 diabetes. Studies published in the Journal of the American Dietetic Association show that meat and dairy producers are the main sources of fat in youngsters' diets.

The late Dr. Benjamin Spock, America's leading authority on child care, spoke out against feeding one's kids as children, saying it can cause insulin dependent diabetes, and, in the long term, will not wish up for obesity and heart disease. Many other experts recommend that parents feed and dress a healthy plant-based diet. For more information, please visit following websites:

—JOSEPH ESTORGIO
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, InstaLATESTdiabetic.com

House failed our country again

"YOUR POLITICAL SYSTEM IS DEgenerative." Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo herself said this in her 2000 State of the Nation Address. According to the Dictionary of the English Language, the word degenerate, as an adjective, means "having fallen to an inferior or undesirable state, especially in moral or moral qualities." So, a woman, a degenerate is "a depraved, corrupt, or vicious person."

If there is one institution in our country's public that best denotes the extent of degeneracy of our political system, it is the House of Representatives. It is the one institution that manifests how so entrenched political dynasties are and how hot in the country's air. For so long an institution dominated by self-serving political leaders, it does everything, right or wrong, to ensure that their political and economic survival is secured.

In the impeachment debate, the House of Representatives showed how a group of degenerates, acting as the majority party, used its unsurmountable power to railroad the rapid consummation however, impeachment complaint against Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo. By hastily dismissing the impeachment complaints, the House members expressed themselves as representatives of the corrupt and not of the people who elected them. They gave Mr. Arroyo a new lease on life, knowing fully well that such an act of goodwill will be returned with generosity. Mr. Arroyo returned the favor by appointing the impeachment champs to a corporate political system also due less, often from it to the same degenerate, conscientious political dynasties that do holistic, support and beneficial.

Mr. Arroyo once pleaded to the Filipino people to let grass the chance to prove her innocence as the proper venue, through a legal process. We gave her that chance, even though we believed that the Ombudsman would not turn into a legal dance but take a moral one and more. The people handed down a resolution, through the impeachment process to remove the issue once if it was common knowledge that the administration had all the means and resources to manipulate an impeachment process in Congress.

We were right. It is an exiled legal process but failed the people once again, but Mr. Arroyo and her top administration celebrated it as a "glorious moment in Philippine history," and the nation like previous, the helpless victims of government corruption and lawlessness of power. In truth, it was an illegal, a shameless "victory" adopted on the backs of the people. Mr. Arroyo remains accountable for the moral and ethical implications of her actions and she remains answerable to the Filipino people. History will be the judge.

Mr. Arroyo remains accountable for the moral and ethical implications of her actions and she remains answerable to the Filipino people. History will be the judge.

—MONSOUR DE CONCEPCION
FACULTY MEMBER
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES BAGUIO

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[author block]

Across the NATION

Assistant Editor Tony Burgonio

Execs warn of new Quezon disaster

CAMP VICENTE LIM, LAGUNA—INCESSANT torrential rains in the past few days and the unchecked logging in the northern Quezon towns of Real, Infanta and General Nakar (Reina) may again cause killer flash floods and mudslides similar to what happened in the area in December last year, the Regional Disaster Coordinating Council (RDCC) in Calabarzon warned yesterday.

The flash floods last year damaged the lives of thousands of residents and left hundreds adrift in roaring rapids the day.

According to demands from RDCC Calabarzon chair, the latest assessments of the area showed that continuous rains and minor landslides have created "mini dams" at the top of the mountain ranges at earlier typhoons.

He said the past three days, he and other officials of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) flew over the Reina area on board a helicopter to conduct an aerial inspection and noted "threatened areas."

During the inspection, Duque said they noticed several "holes and pots" in treeless expanse of the area.

This is said some of the holes now filled with water were caused by landslides last December.

"These really is a potential threat of landslides and flash floods there. Large volumes of water have been deposited in holes which formed like mini dams in area, those may cause trouble for the villages there," Duque told the Inquirer.

In fact, he said, a minor landslide was reported in Barangay Tanauan in Real municipality Wednesday.

"Fortunately, there were no casualties reported after that landslide," he said.

Aside from the heavy downpour, Duque said the continuous cutting of timber trees along the Real-Mauban eastern boundary of the road of flash floods in northern Quezon.

He said even Real Mayor Antonio Ramallosa told them that there were persistent reports of illegal logging in the area.

"We have to do something about it since that is the job of the [Department of Environment and Natural Resources]," he said.

He said aside from massive public information and enhancement campaign, the RDCC is currently updating their hazard maps to monitor and warn areas which are likely to be hit by landslides and flooding.

The establishment of early warning system and improvement of communication centers are also being undertaken with the help of local government units, he said.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa) has also put up additional rain gauge instruments in the area to help RDCC in monitoring adverse weather level. —Marlon Ramos, *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau* and Lauren Bayuyan

Mindoro town farmers uproot Bt-corn plants

GREENPEACE activists and local farmers in protest drive asks uproot Bt-corn plants in Naujan, Mindoro. —

NAUJAN, ORIENTAL MINDORO —Backed by the municipal government and the councilmen in Naujan (Aug. 15 issue), farmers here decontaminated a farm planted to genetically engineered Bt (Bacillus thuringiensis) corn in Barangay Sta. Maria on Thursday.

Persistently united against hazardous materials, the farmers uprooted the Bt-corn plants, placed them in plastic bags and sealed them in drums.

The farmers had been demanding a genetically modified organism-free (GMO-free) Municipality.

They said farm owner Lina Kalaw had promised to plant the Bt-corn despite a provincial ban on GMOs.

Mad Bo, a Department of Land Reform employee, however, allowed her farm to be decontaminated after the municipal chief of the Environment and Natural Resources office, Ramil Jimmy and Lucybelle Tanyag, provincial legal officer, then said a court is under way against Montanoso for violating the code.

Instead of just a salty Green peace, an international non-governmental organization, shamed the farmers that destroying Bt-corn was double and unjust.

"What we did is a first in the country," said Daniel Ocampo, Greenpeace genetic engineering campaigner.

Ocampo said the Philippines should declare a moratorium on the release of GMOs.

He added that the government should also enact the GMO-free area resolution to permanently GMOs.

The municipality of Naujan asked help from Greenpeace, including its experts for on the scene.

"Even before the environmental watch, our vision was not certainly agriculture where the farmers are the focal point of development and not mere lowlevel users of the so-called 'modern technology' which in between the capitalists or multinationals exploiting the farmers," said Naujan Mayor Rodrigo Madrigal.

"The naked terrorism (Bt-corn) Participate to issue a memo to all mayors to enforce the ban on GMO and I'll back it up," said Medalla, also Duquesa of the league of mayors.

Pamalayan said he would mean systems in the first month of July.

A lawyer, the governor clarified that the free enterprise principle invoked by Tobias does not apply because there is a state ban on GMOs.

"We'll conduct information campaign among farmers," he said.

Duque said that in the Green Revolution of Mangaoco 99, the farmers were just made to consume 12 bags of fertilizers (from only 1st Bt-corn) together 15 bags. —Marlon Ramos, *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

138 families flee village in Pampanga as floods rise

CAMP OLIVA, PAMPANGA—At least 138 families in Barangay Bulu in Candaba, Pampanga, were evacuated on Friday as rising floodwaters in the Pampanga River flooded the river banks there.

Mayor Jerry Pineda said the water, he said, was expected to rise as early as months ago as last year's rains are a portion of the banks that remained submerged with concrete said now. The evacuees moved to houses of relatives, he said.

In San Simon town, residents rushed to piling on sandbag segments of the Arenda Dike in Barangay San Jose said demands Austria, Pampanga disaster coordinating council chief.

In Arayat, almost 300 families in Barangay Pulitu in Dingalan town fled their homes on Friday as heavy rains since Tuesday caused the river there to overflow and water in the Dingalan Bay in Casiguran, straining the barangay hall.

Dingalan Councilor Rhoda Tony said the evacuees sought refuge in homes of relatives.

Ranchers were hit by waves of floods and landslides that battered the village in November last year, she said. Relatively, the town was cut off on Tuesday.

In Gabaldon, Nueva Ecija, the Rangkas River swelled on Friday, raising the floodwaters to the villages of South Poblacion, Granell, Pantoc, Bagong Sikat and Calabasa up to Knee-deep, according to Chief Inspector Rolly Gabaldon police chief.

Three families from South Poblacion have evacuated to the Gabaldon Training Center.

The Dingalan-Gabaldon Road was impassable by noon, he said.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development received reports of stranded commuters along the Bongabon (Nueva Ecija)-Baler (Aurora) route. —Inquirer Central Luzon Desk, *PDI Central Luzon Desk*

Roundup

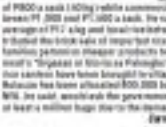
Drug pusher arrested

CAMP VICENTE LIM, Laguna—Members of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency in Calabarzon arrested a drug peddler during a buy-bust operation in Bilibid, Laguna on Sunday. PDEA-Calabarzon director Supt. Abe Lemon identified the suspect as Emily Lumbay, alias "Tisay," 31, of Barangay Mabitac, Bilibid town. Lemon said the suspect was collected after three undercover agents bought 10 grams of shabu from him inside a house in Barangay Cuallo at about 8 p.m. The undercover had four packages supplied. Confiscated were handed up at the PDEA jail in this province. —Marlon Ramos, *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Sorsogon fire

LEGAZPI CITY—The Office of Civil Defense here reported yesterday a fire that razed 50 houses within Barangay Sorsogon in this city on Wednesday afternoon. The fire gutted at least 50 makeshift and semi-concrete houses. The Department of Interior and Local Government was looking at fatally arising as the possible cause of the fire. —Ed Rueda Arevalo, *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Imported rice preferred



CITY OF MALOLOS—Batangas residents have started patronizing cheaper imported rice from Vietnam and Thailand, overtaking the sale of locally milled rice, officials of the National Food Authority said. Malolos NFA chief, Rosalina Mendoza, said the province's NFA outlets are at least 1.5 metric and two cities of PHP 2,000 and PHP 1,000 a sack. He said imported rice sells at an average of PHP 1,600 and locally milled rice sells between PHP 2,000 and PHP 2,500 a sack. He said imported rice is preferred because of its lower price. The province's NFA outlets sell

INQUIRER Visayas

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Editor Jun Bandayrel
Bureau Chief Rodolfo L. Bermudez

Tsinoys give houses to homeless in Escalante

GIVING Kalinga volunteers help build 7st houses for poor residents of Escalante City. MARIA RUBINA NAPAO

By Carla P Gomez
Bacolod City

THE CHINESE-FILIPINO COMMUNITY in the Philippines is actively involved in making a difference in Escalante City, 102.1 km south of Bacolod City and, to someone, the first 56 of the 70 houses it helped build will be lasting proof.

The brand-new Kalinga-Tsinoy Village in Sitio Tuburan, Barangay Old Poblacion is the final housing endeavor in Escalante City that provides homes to residents belonging to the bottom 30 percent of the economic strata with incomes below P5,000 a month.

The other two are the Pag-ibig Habitat for Humanity Village in Barangay Sharon Amoin and the Bishop Archbishop Village in Barangay Poblacion, Escalante City.

Mayor Santiago Benedicto said his aim is to make Escalante City squatter and slum free by 2014 with the construction of 10,000 houses.

His goal, he said, is to set up 25 housing sites in 21 barangays. "Filipinos should not be squatters in their own country and providing people with decent homes to live in will restore their self-respect and dignity," he added.

God-sent

Beneficiaries at the Negros Kum-tawod Kalinga-Tsinoy Village said the houses were God-sent. The village site is a 1,164-hectare lot donated by the family of Benedicto.

Lerlie Gallardo, 36, a widow, cooks for an eatery and washes clothes on the side but was also homeless once.

Earning only about P120 a day has made it difficult for her to buy necessities to patch up her leaking roof and hoping to earn decent home has remained a dream, she said.

But "by the grace of the Lord and the kindness of the mayor," she said, the dream of owning a house becomes a reality. She has been chosen to receive a house being built in Tsinoy Village.

The houses in the village are arranged so it does not look like a slum area anymore, she said. The brightly painted houses and newly planted trees and shrubs make their village "better looking than some subdivisions," she said.

Charlie Cobarrio, 13, said his father is a laborer in the Escalante pier. His mother died giving birth to their brother in January. He said his family (he has two other brothers and two sisters) lived in a shanty made of bamboo and coconut lumber and could only dream of a better house, until they received a windfall with their inclusion in Tsinoy Village beneficiary.

He said he should be in Grade 6 now but he had to quit studies because his father could not afford to send him to school.

THE Del KIANGAN quire a soap during the construction of the Tsinoy GK village.

He said he has learned some skills in building houses. He has to contribute labor as part of the seven-equity payment for the house to be given to his family.

Manuel Maldecis, 54, said he has not been able to work for five years because of an illness. He said his son Manuel Jr., who works in a bakery in Cebu, is helping his family survive by sending them money from time to time.

Manuel Sr., his wife and two other minor children live in a one-room shack that was just enough for them to sleep in.

"That is why I am overjoyed that my family has been included among the Tsinoy Village beneficiaries," said Maculado.

Justiere Alabanan, 15, said his father who worked as a stevedore at the Escalante pier died in January and his mother, Salvacion, worked as a household help to make a living. Mabuhay said he has five other brothers and sisters and they are very happy their family has been chosen as beneficiary of the Tsinoy Village houses.

Mabuhay said he does not go to school but he is learning new building skills.

Tsinoys for nation-building

Ann-Anne Gonzalez Tuvera-Ang Sio, founding president of Kuan Pun Ka Kuan Inan, will represent Ambassador John C. Ng, Special Envoy for Chinese Affairs, at the inauguration of the 56 houses that the Chinese-Filipino community donated.

The donation of the 400 houses was coursed through Kuan Pun na Kuanlinan, according to Uy Go, president of the Negros Kuan Inc.

"The involvement of the Tsinoy community in building houses for the poor shows that Chinese-Filipinos are just proud to be Filipinos; they are involved in nation-building," Go said.

Negros Kuan has also helped raise funds from the Tsinoy community for another 35 houses in the village, Go said. Benedicto said he is also raising funds for another 11 houses.

Bacolaod sets dream as the site of the Tsinoy Village because Barotheus is a Tsinoy and this year's Dr. Jose P. Rizal awardee for Educational Public Service, Jr. said.

The Negros Kuan Inc. together with the Kuan Pun in Kinalinan Inc., Grand Kalinga Community Development Inc., and the City of Escalante is building the Tsinoy Village, Go said.

Selection process

"This is a clear case that shows that the Tsinoy community is involved in nation building contrary to the stereotype that they are only engaged in making money for themselves through their businesses," Go said.

Those who have committed to donate the 15 additional houses, according to Go, are:

- The Negros Kuan Inc.
- Appliance Continue through Juan Gochangco
- Bong Te Ong, care of Philtancorp
- An anonymous of Bo Kun Cheng, care of Carol Ang
- An anonymous of Joaquin Gochangco
- An anonymous of Tan Tong and Gan Chui Go, care of Lilli Go, and
- Philippine Lion Tek Pawnshop, Incorporated Empire, care of Victor Go.

Also committed are:

- Negros Tai Guan Temple Inc., care of Edward Ong
- The Bacolod Negros Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry Inc.
- The Southern Negros Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, care of Wilson Lee
- Negros Occidental Lion Kai Foundation, care of Benjie Barcelona
- Philippine Long Yee Gee Family Association Negros Occidental Chapter, care of Benjie Uy
- Bacolod Filipino-Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry Inc., care of James Chua
- Angel Sugar Central through Rony Cuizon, and
- The Negros Occidental Chi Tong Gee Clan Association through Jones Gina.

Barotheus said.

The mayor said the beneficiaries of the houses were chosen based on social profiling conducted by the Department of Social Welfare and Development. They were given houses in exchange for 2,000 man-hours of work by a family—50 percent to be rendered by the head (s) covered by the members, Barotheus said.

As with all Gawad Kalinga projects, each beneficiary family must render sweat equity, so they should assist in building their house as well as their neighbors' houses, he explained.

A down payment of 400 man-hours of work is required for a family to be allowed to move in to their new homes, he said.

Each of the houses is floating and has a floor area of 22 square meters, including an extension for a rear room or kitchen. They are built on 72-square-meter lots.

There will be a landscaped park and playground, community facilities, greenbelts, campground and vegetable plots, Go said.

CHARLIE, right, in front of his shanty.

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Runner-up: Myan's Badminton Center
AUGUST 20-21 | The Zone Badminton Center
Central Eliminations Champion: The Zone
Runner-up: Power Smash
SEPTEMBER 3 | Shaw Holiday Spot
Mindanao Eliminations Champion
Smash Villa Fitness Center
SEPTEMBER 3 | Metro Sports Badminton Hall
Visayas Eliminations Champion
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South Eliminations Champion: Alabang Country Club
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Pasig nets P500,000 in savings

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

PASIG CITY HALL SAVED MORE than P500,000 in electricity bills in the first eight months of 2005 but Mayor Vicente Eusebio is not happy about it.

The savings was way below the 15 percent targeted by the mayor.

From January to August, the city hall incurred P6,969,324 in electricity bills which was only P577,269, or 7.65 percent, lower than the local government's consumption of P7,546,694 for the same period last year.

Eusebio said the energy savings would be added to the city's bank deposits.

He had instructed city employees to save on electricity, phone and water consumption but the order was not strictly followed.

Idled while he called "pahinto mo, observasyon" of his orders, he again issued another memorandum three weeks ago. This time, he had copies of the memorandum pasted on the doors of most city hall offices.

The order instructs employees to use air-conditioners only three hours every day.

The memorandum said "air-conditioning units are to be opened (from) 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. (and from) 2:30 p.m. to 4 p.m." during work days—and only if their bosses are around.

Office lights have to be turned off during lunch breaks in order to achieve 15 percent savings.

Bike lane project suffers delay; MMDA unfazed

By Tarra F. Quismundo

IT WAS A WELCOME RESPITE FOR THE METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority (MMDA).

President Macapagal-Arroyo was supposed to launch today the MMDA's bike lane and walkway pilot project in Quezon City but since the Chief Executive was still abroad, the launching had to be postponed for Sept. 24.

The postponement gave the MMDA one more week to prepare for the launch.

Bb Arroyo, who supports the walk and pedal ways project, was scheduled to come home at dawn tomorrow, arriving from a United Nations summit in New York.

The change in schedule stunned a government development official who said the agency's traffic engineering office has yet to finish the 2.6-kilometer pilot lanes along Xavierville avenue in Quezon City.

"We have desilted the sidewalk and will begin the installation of signages and lane markings on Monday. Had it (launching) not been rescheduled, we would have been done measuring since Monday," said Ramon Ortiz, chief engineer of the MMDA Traffic Engineering Center (TEC).

Edsa-Katipunan connection

The bike route will connect Katipunan Avenue with Edsa.

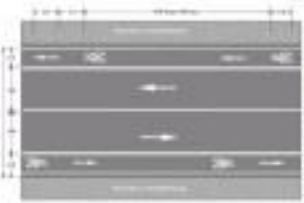
Pink and white thermoplastic or heat-applied paint will be used to set off the bike lanes, which will be about 1.2 meters wide. Sidewalks will be placed on either side of the road on some portions, and on one side in others, with ample space for vehicles.

Streets traversed by the bike ways, including the secondary roads E20 and E6 Streets, will be "dedicated" as walk and pedal ways until Orta, forcing residents still be allowed to bring their vehicles and park on the sidewalk.

The MMDA based its walk and bike ways technical design on standards established in Japan, and in Chicago, Illinois, and Washington D.C. in the United States.

"We based these on standards with some modifications to adapt to the local situation," said Ortiz.

MMDA Director of Manager Robert Nazareno said the government of Quezon City had been helping the agency look for streets to include in the project.



TYPICAL TWO-SIDE ONE-BIKE TRIVIAL BIKE LANE (BOTH SIDES SHOWN)

GRAPHICS above and below show the layout of bike and walk ways that will connect Bike with Katipunan Avenue in Quezon City.

TYPICAL WALKWAY AND BIKEWAY DEDICATED ROAD

MetroBriefs

Radios blamed for car theft

If CAR thefts are on the rise in Quezon City, the police have militant groups and other activists groups to blame, Quezon City Police District director Chief Supt. Eduardo Matillano Jr. said the upsurge of car theft cases in the city may be attributed partly to the recent protest rallies against the government. Demonstrations took up his men at the police's time, which would otherwise have been spent cruising street corners, the city police chief told Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. Radnapan said that from January to August, 346 car thefts were recorded in the city, as opposed to 191 for the same period last year. JV Tiu

Hungry Calocan thieves

SEE CONTENT with talking P20,000 and $1,200 from the office of a retired judge, robbers in Caloocan City devoted a building canteen in Caloocan City and carried away non-perishable of processed food like other days. In a police report, robbers broke into the office of former Caloocan City Judge Silvestre R. Bello III at the ground floor Gerardo Building along Rizal Avenue. Bello, police said, is the father of former justice secretary and present peace talks negotiator Silvestre H. Bello III. The robbers, investigators said, were able to enter Bello's office through a broken window by removing a temporary wood cover. Nancy C. Carvajal

Religious tour to Korea

FR. ODON Dilao, S.V.D., leads a pilgrimage to Baja, Korea, from Sept. 20 to 26 to meet visionary Julia Kim. The highlight of the 60-day pilgrimage will be the visit to the Ohja Blessed Mother's House which has the image of the Blessed Mother as painted by Julia Kim. The image reportedly sheds tears, giving messages and wondrous signs that include hair, tears of blood, fragrance of roses, fragrant oil, and miraculous healing of various illnesses. The tour costs $1,595 plus per person on twin sharing and is open to a minimum of 30 persons. For information call Creative Travel House, Inc. at 844-8211, 843-7987, 893-5680.

Imelda and Kamag-anak Inc.

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

NOW IT'S OFF: FORMER President Cory Aquino is the cousin Boose Storm Rep. Imee Marcos aided with President Macapagal-Arroyo in the recent Ilocos campaign.

Mr Aquino is at the forefront of the movement to have GMA resign or ousted through impeachment.

In this country old wounds are not forgotten soon. If they're long healed. Filipinos, although mostly Christians, do not easily forget what their enemies have done to them.

In the case of the Aquinos and the Marcoses, the enmity will be there for a long, long time.

Cory Aquino, supposedly a devout Catholic, reacted at all when she became vindictive toward the Marcoses when she was in power.

She couldn't forget and forget what the dictator Marcos supposedly did to her husband.

To Ms Aquino, making the Marcoses drift was good even if some of their deeds benefited the nation.

She even refused to have Ferdinand Marcos buried at the Libingan ng mga Bayani, in violation of the Filipino custom of forgiving a dead person his sins.

Now, it's time for the mom's arch hostile Marcos to get back at Cory and Imee Marcos' ailing with GMA to use silence to free another's souls in the start of the payback.

Imelda's jewels, worth $20 million, are up for sale by Christie's auction house in London.

The jewels were confiscated by the US government from the Marcoses when they landed in Hawaii after being driven out by People Power in 1986.

The jewels were turned over to Presidential Commission on Good Government (PCGG).

But don't you know that those jewels are just the tip of the iceberg? Had the PCGG done its job of confronting the Marcos properties, the government could have secured more Marcos assets.

When the Marcos family hurriedly left Malacañang, they left behind items more expensive than the ones confiscated from them in Hawaii.

Many of those items, including jewelry, were looted by people who got to Malacañang in the first hours after the departure of the Marcoses.

One of the looters was allegedly a relative of a prosecutor who became a top government official during the Aquino administration.

After Ms Aquino took power, relatives of the top official also reportedly looted the mansions of the Marcoses in Ilocos Norte and the provinces. In Tacloban, other relatives of the official looted the Sto. Niño Shrine where expensive paintings and jewelry were stored.

You know who those relatives are. The late columnist Louie Beltran referred to them collectively as "Kamag-anak Inc."

GENYO AT MANILA INT'L BOOK FAIR

Genyo, the country's first e-learning program designed for high school students, joined the 26th Manila International Book Fair, a gathering of the biggest names and players in the publishing industry. Genyo, a product of Bites Learning Systems, is an interactive e-learning program that includes Math, English, Science, Filipino and Araling Panlipunan modules.

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San Mateo landfill eyed for power project

By Abigail L. Ho

IN AN ATTEMPT TO SHOW THAT waste can turn into profit, the Philippine National Oil Co. said yesterday that it is eyeing the San Mateo landfill in Rizal province for its landfill gas-to-power project.

PNOC energy research development manager Victorino Reño said drilling work had already begun at the San Mateo dump to test its power potential.

The area may also provide for a similar project to plant at the Payatas landfill in Quezon City, said PNOC president Eduardo Malaluan.

In partnership with the Quezon City local government and a private investor, the project involves the installation of a landfill gas collection system and a 1-megawatt (MW) electric power generator at the Payatas dump.

Reño said a 110-kilowatt power generator was already running at the site. This would later be expanded to 1 MW to supply the power requirements of Payatas residents.

Apart from being able to use garbage for something useful in providing electricity to a community, Reño added that the project could also generate cash through carbon credits.

Some 100,000 cubic meters of carbon credits had already been generated from the project, he said. Japan had been buying these for about $5-$6 a ton.

Under the Kyoto Protocol, credits would be generated by firms that invest in renewable energy, energy efficiency improvement, land use, forestry and agricultural projects, and methane control programs.

These credits can then be traded or be developed into more formal financial instruments such as bonds, guarantees, credit lines or funds.

The concept of emissions trading stemmed from the need to curb a greenhouse gas buildup. The Kyoto Protocol requires developed countries to limit their greenhouse gas emissions. To be able to meet their Kyoto commitments, these countries are allowed to purchase carbon credits that they can use to offset their excess carbon emissions.

TRICK OR TREAT?
Passing motorists ignore a "free car wash" sign along Boni Serrano in Mandaluyong City at the height of a heavy downpour yesterday

Makati drugs drive experience hailed

By Tarra V. Quismundo

BOTH SIDES YOU DO IT!

Officials from Malaysia and Sri Lanka led the question-and-answer portion of Makati City officials' video documentary explaining illegal drugs as a serious international anti-drug institutions in areas Puerto Princesa, Palawan.

"The enthusiasm showed by participants from other Asian countries shows that we are on the right track and that our experiences can be shared not only with other local governments units in the Philippines, but to Asia as well," said Makati Vice Mayor Ernesto Mercado in a statement.

Representatives from Sri Lanka and Malaysia were curious about Makati's anti-drug programs after the city was presented as an example of the Philippines' "Best Practices" experience at the 2nd International Conference/Workshop on Issues Often Against Drugs by helping establish the drug database.

Malaysia and Sri Lanka representatives wanted to learn Makati's "secrets" and assisted officials of the Makati Anti-Drug Abuse Council (MADAC) in their respective countries to share with them pointers about the local campaign.

Ever since MADAC cracked down on drug use and peddling in the city's neighborhoods, 9,000 Makatizens have undergone drug rehabilitation. Of drug users, and a wide-reaching information campaign.

Wanted: deserving cops for TOPM award

By Ploughan C. Orda

THE SEARCH IS ON FOR THE most outstanding policemen in the city of Manila.

The Manila Police District (MPD) and the Manila Chinese Young Men's Club launched the search yesterday during a meeting at the Pan Pacific Hotel.

MPD director Chief Supt. Isidro Rodriguez explained that the Outstanding Policemen of Manila or TOPM are one of the latest Club's continuing efforts to recognize deserving individual policemen in the Manila police force.

"Despite the fact that we lack police manpower, we were able to bring down the crime rate in Manila by 18.37 percent for the second quarter of 2005," the police chief added.

The TOPM award is open to all qualified Manila policemen who can show how he or she has contributed to the maintenance of peace and order in the city, he explained.

Chinese Young Men's Club president Rafael Alunan said the selection process has been set from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15.

The awards ceremony is scheduled on Nov. 11 at the Jumbo Kingdom floating restaurant.

HEAVY rains fail to dampen the spirits of Manny Pacquiao and his fans as he is borne on a motorcade around the city of Manila yesterday morning. Mayor Lito Atienza (left), son Kiko and City Hall officials hold on the red carpet to honor the city's adopted son who knocked out Mexico's Medgar Mosquera in the sixth round in Los Angeles last Saturday

New Pacquiao campaigns for nat'l unity

By Tina G. Santos

RETURNING TO A TUMULTUous welcome in rainy weather, Manny Pacquiao yesterday sprang a happy surprise when he announced he has reformed and would work for national unity.

Stranded by reports of his continued forays to cockfighting arenas and billiard parlors, Pacquiao vowed to "change my ways, in fact, I'm now reading the inspirational book 'The Purpose Driven Life'."

"Salamat sa inyong dasal para manalo ako (Thank you for your prayers)," he said during a press conference at the Manila City Hall. "Sana mawasto nyo magkwento ang mga (Hopefully) I hope Filipinos will finally unite)."

The Manila city government, led by Mayor Lito Atienza, rolled out the red carpet for Pacquiao, who thrilled the nation when he stopped Mexican Erik Morales in the sixth round of a scheduled 12-round super featherweight bout in Los Angeles last Saturday.

Pink, white and blue confetti fell as Pacquiao, an adopted son of Manila, returned to the streets of adoring fans who lined up the streets in the rain.

Mayor Atienza said Pacquiao's victory provided Filipinos with a welcome respite from months-long political strife.

"His victory gave us respite from political turmoil," Atienza said.

He has four children with actress Jinkee Pacquiao but refused to divulge if his wife would be joining him in the motorcade.

"Mahiyain po ito (I'm not sure)," he said, adding that Jinkee would be with him at the City Hall.

Pacquiao was later presented with a key to the city and a proclamation declaring September 16 as Manny Pacquiao Day in Manila.

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Bohol roars as Boom Boom assures he's not from Cebu

By Solven L. Lagumbay, Contributor

CAMIQUIN, BOHOL—IT TOOK JENNIFER, red Boy "Boom Boom" Barrera three rounds to stop his Colombian foe in California on Saturday, but he wasted no time Thursday to assure swarming Boholanos he did not migrate to Cebu and have remained their very own.

Barrera, who sparked the three-tiered festivities celebrating by Filipino heroes in the United States last weekend, made the announcement upon touching down in Tagbilaran, en route to this sleepy municipality where he was born to poor farmer parents 33 years ago.

Governor Erico Aumentado Jr. led ecstatic and loud residents in welcoming their newly-crowned hero, as he made his way to the town's poblacion and into the municipal building lined with a program awaiting him.

"This is the biggest welcome we have prepared so far for a local resident in this town's history," said municipal health officer Arsidito Tan from interview with Cebu Daily News. "Everybody has been talking about this."

Barrera's scheduled two-hour trip to his hometown, some 95 km east of Tagbilaran, stretched to three hours as his convoy had to make stopovers in Candabong and Jagna to allow fans to shake hands and kiss him.

"This trip is very special to us Boholanos because our town is coming home from a big victory," said mayor Nemesio Wenson, who regards the trip starting from Tagbilaran.

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Rookies take backseat to PBA imports

By Jane Navarro

REPORTS HAVE SURFACED TO OFFICIALS OF THE COMMISSIONER of the Philippine basketball association, first issue of the season. They wind up as the main dish at the expense of the locals.

A ranking league official noted no day and then the season media draft would never in purpose lower should the import-laced tournament in the first conference to hold at the season starting mid-to-late October.

"The opening conference should showcase our rookies rather than imports," said the official who requested anonymity.

Scheduled to begin on Oct. 2, the two-conference calendar of the 31st PBA season will kick off with the reinforced conference followed by an all-Filipino one-month in the latter half of the season.

"The presence of imports defeats the purpose of having a draft where the best rookies," the source said.

The league official has invented of giving rookies more opportunities for maximum exposure, a large portion of the players' playing time spent in the draftee.

"When the all-Filipino conference comes, the imports and the rookies are given more the limit have already watched their rookies in the first conference," he added.

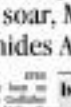
Rookies Anthony Washington and Mac Cardona of Talk 'N Text, Ito Lucio Beatty's elder Gilbert and Gaut Cahil, Coker's Dennis Miranda, Jonalan Salvador of Purefoods, Ato D'o Niño Canadien, Red Bull's Leroy Rosario, Leo Najorda and Paolo Hugna are the promising rookies whose talent will later to take the backseat in the first conference.

Ato D' has talent in Jesse Daniels as import...Alaska has Tim McCrary, Bus Lonie Beasley will back up Lenny Cooke while Talk 'N Text is reportedly looking up with to former import Tinsley Gaines.

Coca-Cola coach Bonley Davis said his import, Alex Circuitos, is arriving today, Purefoods has gotten the services of Marquis Chandler, Barangay Ginebra's got Mercurio Hoff and San Miguel's is reportedly eyeing Jerald Honeycutt. Brgy. Ginebra has re-signed Eric Menk but will be sidelined for the first conference as he is still recovering for an injury.

Get up and soar, MVP chides Ateneo

IN HUDDLE



Butch Cuño

Eagles' loss leaves Black in the dark

By Jasmine W. Paya

RANGED AGAINST THEIR BETter rivals, the La Salle Archers showed laser-like focus.

"We came out aggressive and we came really prepared," said coach Franz Pumaren after his Archers completed an elimination-round sweep over the Ateneo Eagles, 73-53, in front of sparse-at-sellout crowd last Thursday in the UAAP basketball tournament at the Institute Coliseum.

"We scouted them well," added Pumaren. "Look at our size. Compared to their team, we're so small. But we complemented with hard work and extra effort."

Pumaren, though, wasn't expecting a repeat of their lopsided 78-60 first-round triumph over the Eagles.

Indeed, the tournament's smaller results also contributed shooters made Norman Black.

"We just played bad," said the outbitted tactician. "The happy with our performance all season, but not until this game."

Although the Eagles failed in their bid to claim the outstanding twice-to-beat advantage, Black remained optimistic.

"Our only problem right now is we had a chance to score in second and we let that one go," said Black. "But we're now here in the Final Four. We have to stay two games to make it to the finals, but at least we have a chance."

The Archers, meanwhile, can still claim the semifinal bonus if they win over the University of the East Warriors on Sunday in a game scheduled replayed last week.

A La Salle win would forge a three-way tie at 10-4 among the leaders. Warriors said the Eagles, but the defending champions would clinch the No. 2 slot due to a superior quotient.

Pumaren, naturally, wouldn't want his boys to let their guard down.

"There's no reason for us to be complacent even if [The Happy with] where we are right now," said Pumaren. "I'm so proud of my players. We're just peaking at the right time."

For Eastern, it already claimed the first twice-to-beat incentive earlier Thursday, and so the top team will face the No. 4 opponent for Final Four.

If the Archers have their way, they'll have an easier final four, with UE and Ateneo clashing in the other duel for the second title slot.

LA SALLE'S JR Aquino (r) is off Ateneo's JC Intal and Martin Quinones in their UAAP game Thursday

RP's Sy dominates AF3 practice

SY: Another crack

BOGOR, INDONESIA—PICKING UP FROM where he left off last month, Filipino runner Yasmin Sy emerged as the fastest female runner on Thursday as he crossed his bid for a breakthrough win in the Asian Festivals Three-series at the front of International Circuit here.

Despite clocking the faster time of one 3 minute, 24.6 seconds at the 4.3 kilometer track, however, the 17-year-old Sy found herself on Spoonbeck Asia, refused to be content losing more than a slightest miscalculation or a quick change in formation could again ruin his bid to end an 89-year drought in the latest hopping series that ing Indonesia for the second time this year.

The battle for pole position in the 8th round of the series will be held Saturday after another record-breaking performance from Filipino Yasmin Sy. The initial round will be held Sunday with the 9th round set in the morning and the 10th round of the 12-leg series slated in the afternoon.

Twelve-of-Ten (3 drivers competing here raised the circuit Thursday, with another Filipino young gun, Dada Bolet, 24, of Team Goddard-Mitsubishi Team Asia consistently coming up second fastest behind Sy for the second of three sessions, Malaysia clocked 1:26.2, just ahead of leaders series leader Asanda Mbadwa Bantu to facing with Pinoshood.

Irishman John O'Brien of Shell Helix Electric PCSO was fourth fastest in 1:35.5, followed by Mexican-ex Rodolfo Avila of Christian Jones Motorsport (1:35.6), Indian Marcus Ambrose of Dream Chaser Formula 3 (1:36.7), Filipino Peyton Monson of Shell Helix (1:37.6), Irishman Gavin Farrell of Shell Helix (1:37.8), Indonesian Gary Mulyadi of Team Goddard-Kliinpell Team Asia (1:38.8) and Filipino Mike Tanseco (1:39.0).

Enthusiasts can log on to www.asiancf3.net and www.pilipinasspeed.com for more details.

Sy will go into the qualifying session with 61 points to a tie for fifth round ninth places with Peha-

Cavite cagers turn back Spring Laguna

CAVITE RANGED ON THE LAST STRETCH OF Christian Counsel and Jobert Rodriguez to top Spring Cooking Oil-supported Laguna, 70-68, Thursday as the start of their bout of three-round basketball championship in the Westlagoon gym in Molino City.

Counsel's rebounding shot came after Spring's Val Formentera, the most valuable player in the recent 9th Crown Prince Cup tournament in Thailand, had tied the game for the last time at 68 with three free throws.

Spring swept Laguna in two games to claim the semifinals of the tournament supported by Monumic, Solgate Lime, Spring Cooking Oil, Sunbelt Sports Drink, Accel, Molten, Hanson's Spring, Ilo Eastern Insurance, Shugo Motorcycle, Stylus, Inspire Toothpaste, Orthofresh, KDE Hotel Pendaries (Tay Bantong), Bayview Dusk Hotel and Subdivision Plaza Cebu.

The scores:

Leviste tops Malaysia riding tilt

TOM Lorenzo shears an obstacle en route to Asian Cholon Platinum Loop of Fame

WW President's Cup tees off today

Get up and soar, MVP chides Ateneo

IN HUDDLE

Butch Cuño

SOS: Lights out in Paglaum

By Marc Anthony Reyes

A TOP OFFICIAL OF THE 2005 PHILIPPINE Southeast Asian Games organizing committee yesterday blasted the Department of Education regional office in Bacolod City for delaying the renovation of the Paglaum sports stadium.

Sen. Manuel Panfilo, also the weightlifting president, said workers could not install the lighting system worth P12 million for the football field because squatters refused to close the area.

He said Deped assistant secretary Camilo Montesa has already been given authority to evict the squatters but refuses to do so.

"They (Deped) are jeopardizing the SEA Games preparations for Bacolod," Panlilio told the Inquirer. "We have given them the request eight months ago and until now with just three months to go, they haven't acted yet."

He said the Deped chairperson is needed for the eviction notice to be served on the squatters who have made Paglaum their home for years.

Gretchen Ho

Bondad seals SEAG golf slot

By Mayang P. Carrillo

PRINCESS Bondad, the former RP Ladies' champ, finally obtained her Philippine passport, paving the way for her inclusion in the national team in the 22nd Southeast Asian Games.

Born in Los Angeles and raised in Scottsdale, the 17-year-old, according to father Noel, was informed of the release of her passport by the National Golf Association of the Philippines last week.

"Princess is in great shape and is very excited to play for her motherland," Noel told the Inquirer in an interview.

The SEAG will actually be Bondad's third tournament wearing the Philippine colors before the year ends.

Bondad will see action in the Spalding tournament, which includes only the Top 20 teams in the World Amateur in Puerto Rico last year, in Houston, Texas, in the first week of October.

She is also expected to lead a coach field in the RP amateurs, where the PGAP will crown its first ever women's match-play champion.

For inquiries, call 832-1264987, 832-1241585, 0920-9507514, 0917-5607074, or (634) 441-1130.

Gretchen Ho cagers in mall tour today

PBA GAMES are expected to wrap its Visayan-to-Caldera leg today in Iloilo with their favorite Batangas Tiendesa players who will grace the PBA fans at the Visayanon main of mall. Orphan Santos, Gerald Tabuloso and Aris Dimaculangan will be on hand to host the fans in a four-filled afternoon beginning at 4 p.m. PBA cagers from various teams are touring Metrocom malls in conjunction with the celebration of the PBA's 30th anniversary. At the same time, San Miguel Beer players, led by Chris Calimpan, Paolo Mendoza and Francis Adriano, will visit Robinsons in Angeles City to treat their supporters. The tour also serves as part of the buildup for the league's Oct. 7 season opening.

4 entries top Makati derby

FOUR thoroughbreds shared top honors in the Pinoy Cockers Incorporated Philippine Racing Derby at the Makati Coliseum recently. Posting identical 4-1 betting odds are Binangonan of Gov. Ito Ynares and former undersecretary Sandiganbayan justice Edilberto G. Sandoval, Bibo Bistek, John John John of Dory Fuentes and Goldencrest Via of Randy Talledo. The third PCRF 5-stag derby slotted on Monday with more than P1 lights fired up. Ballroom starts at 4 p.m. Submission of outlights is tomorrow. Inquiries (or to log on For inquiries, call 8565000 ext 8565047). Meanwhile, the PCSO Sports and Amusement Corp. is readying the P2-million Thoroughbred Selection 6-Cock Derby in December.

RMC 6-stag fights begin

MORE than 300 game-fowl breeders from the North and the South are coming to Cebu for today's Rio Tuy Boxing Pandesal 6-Stag Derby sponsored by Lalajoa Drug Inc. and Bugsuk Beef Luncheon at Hotel de Mactan Resort.

At stake is a guaranteed prize of at least P1.5 million for an entry fee of only P6,000. The amount could reach P2 million due to the big number of entries, said derby head Edgar Gonzon, who will be assisted by cock managers Renato Oliva, Gerald Tan and Alex Cordero. Last year, 291 entries competed with Tres Reyes of San Jose in Pangasinan becoming the crown. Slated today is the 5-stag first round.

Mauresmo, Pierce unite for France in Fed Cup final

PARIS—AMELIE MAURESMO AND Mary Pierce faced off in a place in the US Open semifinals last week. This weekend the French pair will be united against defending champion Russia in the Fed Cup final.

Pierce beat Mauresmo, 6-4, 6-1, in the US Open quarterfinals, and went on to lose a lopsided 6-1, 6-0 to Kim Clijsters.

Together, they hope to help France win its first Fed Cup title and avenge November's 3-2 final sudden defeat to Russia in Moscow.

Russia will be without world

MAURESMO PIERCE

No. 1 Maria Sharapova, but the team still boasts 2004 French Open champion Anastasia Myskina and Elena Dementieva.

It will be the third straight year Pierce and Russia have met and the eighth time overall in Fed Cup, dating back to 1993. Russia holds a 5-2 lead. AP

'Goose' wins; Monty ousted

VIRGINIA WATER, ENGLAND—BERNHARD Langer, 47, of Germany won Scotland's Jimmy Allis Trophy with a 3-under par 69 to finish at 9-under 279 for the 54 holes at the Wentworth Club.

Langer, who won the Ryder Cup in 1985, 1987 and 1991, finished one stroke ahead of Scotland's Colin Montgomerie (70) and Ireland's Padraig Harrington (71).

WHAT'S INSIDE
Aboitiz eyes sale of treasury shares
Downstream natural gas sector secures funding commitment
Strike looms at Makati Med

BUSINESS

BIR overstates August collection by P1.4B

By Michelle V. Ramos

Revenue agency included non-cash payment of Treasury

THE BUREAU OF INTERNAL Revenue overstated its tax collection for August by P1.4 billion.

Documents from the Department of Finance, the BIR's head agency, showed that the tax bureau collected only P63.3 billion in August compared with the P65.1 billion that the revenue officer reported earlier.

The overstatement resulted from the BIR's move to include non-cash payments as part of its collection for the month.

A Finance official said the P1.4 billion non-cash payment that was included in the BIR's collection was the one given by the National Treasury to cover its downstream energy firm [SNP] liabilities. Government securities such as treasury bills and bonds sold by the Treasury are subject to the DBM.

Instead of paying its P1.4 billion in DBP liabilities, the Treasury gave the BIR a tax certificate scheme (TSS) to cover for the same duc. A TSS is a document that a government agency can issue to the BIR as a form of tax payment. The TSS serves as a notice to the national government that it can simply deduct the tax liabilities from the budget (that will be allocated to the agency).

"When one pays using the TSS, it is BIR does not receive any cash. The TSSs is for book-entry purposes only," the finance official said.

The official said the Interagency Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC), the body tasked with setting the government's economic policies and targets, has adopted the policy that tax payments in the form of TSSs should only be indicated as a memo item in the BIR's collection report and should not be included in the computation of the actual collection.

But the correction made to the BIR's August collection did not erase its record of outstanding tax collection target for the month. The BIR's revised August collection of P53.7 billion was still P1.3 billion higher than the P52.4 billion it was tasked to collect for the month.

The correction, however, would mean that the budget surplus for August would be lower than expected. National Treasurer Omar Cruz earlier said the national government could have posted a budget surplus of about P3 billion in August.

Aboitiz eyes sale of treasury shares

To raise funds for energy projects, acquisitions

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE ABOITIZ GROUP IS PLANNING A maiden sale this year to lure local and foreign investors to buy P4 billion worth of its treasury shares, a top company official told the business.

Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc. had said it was raising fresh funds from the sale of 890 million treasury shares possibly this year.

AEV traded at P5 a share yesterday.

Sources told the business that AEV was looking to participate in the expected bidding for the government's 1.2-MW Mindoro plant and 1,000-MW Pantabangan facility in Nueva Ecija sometime in November.

In a separate disclosure yesterday, AEV said its subsidiary, Davao Light & Power Co. Inc., had sold around 1.2 million shares of AEV at P4.95 each.

The Aboitiz Group is setting aside some P5-P6 billion for possible investments in power generation in the next two to three years.

Officials said the group was also looking at the possibility of bidding for power plants owned by the cash-strapped National Power Corp.

The company is particularly interested in Napocor's hydroelectric plants in Ambuklao and Binga, both in Benguet, the two power facilities in Nueva Ecija, and the 300-MW Magat plant in Northern Luzon. AEV executive vice president and chief operating officer Jonathan Aboitiz had earlier said the group was currently doing due diligence on these plants.

To further solidify its power generation business, the Aboitiz Group through subsidiary Hydroelectric Development Corp. (Hedco) is putting up a 49-MW hydroelectric power plant in Davao.

Aboitiz estimated that the project would cost roughly P3.5 billion. Hedco will start construction on the plant by next year and hopefully start operations in 2008.

AEV earlier partnered with Norwegian firm SN Power Invest AS to jointly bid for and develop Napocor's hydroelectric assets that have been lined up for privatization.

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SMC earns $10.24M from Vietnam units

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SAN MIGUEL CORP. HAS BEEN REAPING the benefits of Vietnam's booming economy, reporting a double-digit growth in revenues to $10.24 million for the first seven months of the year.

In a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange yesterday, San Miguel said that the revenue of its packaging plants in Vietnam—San Miguel Yamamura Binhdoung Glass Co. Ltd. and San Miguel Pet Thi- Packaging Co. Ltd.—rose 11.2 percent higher than the $9.21 million it posted year-on-year.

The two SMPP facilities cater to the food and beverage sectors in Vietnam.

The company's packaging division, San Miguel Packaging Products, runs both its domestic and international packaging businesses.

San Miguel expanded its Vietnam operations just as the country's private consumption jumped 15 percent in 2004 from 7 percent the year before, as industrial activity employment and growing incomes. Vietnam is considered to have one of the fastest growing economies in the region.

As of June this year, San Miguel's packaging group sales grew 26 percent to P18.34 billion against the previous year.

Better management of fixed costs and savings realized from the use of lower-cost raw materials bolstered operating income.

AIM W. SyCip

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www.aim.edu.ph

Shares

[illegible] advanced 5.5 percent or P27 on continued bargain hunting.

During active trading, however, turnover [illegible] fell short of the [illegible] ahead of guidance [illegible] 26. There were 49 stocks unchanged.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. was the most actively traded stock, falling 4.1 percent to P1,335 on profit taking. Also suffering losses was Bank of the Philippine Islands, off [illegible] percent at P45.

PCCI Securities president Francisco Libora said concrete [illegible] efforts to water down the expanded value added tax law—the conception of the government's fiscal reform program—has kept selling pressure from exiting the market.

A congressional ally of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has filed a resolution seeking to defer the implementation of the VAT overhaul and energy products and June next year due to rising oil prices.

The Supreme Court on Sept. 1 upheld the legality of the expanded VAT law, but ruled the implementation it imposed on the measure on July to give the opposition a chance to challenge the ruling. Opposing parties have until Friday to file a motion. AP

DISCLOSURES

ABOITIZ Equity Ventures Inc. (AEV) disclosed that a subsidiary of the company, Davao Light & Power Co. Inc., sold on Sept. 15 a total of 1.2 million shares of AEV at the price of P4.95 per share.

***

CITYSTATE Savings Bank Inc. opened yesterday, Sept. 19, its newest branch on 4/F Shaw Blvd., Barangay Addition Hills, Mandaluyong City. The Shaw Boulevard branch will be open from Mondays to Fridays from 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

***

EEI Corp. (Philippines) Inc. elected new officers during an organizational meeting on Sept. 16. Gregorio C. Dizon, chair; Teresita O. Dizon, president; Frederick J. Dizon, treasurer; Francis V. Guerlin, corporate secretary; and Mamerto and Guerlin, directors/ officers. Four committees were also formed: the Nomination Committee to be chaired by Teresita E. Dizon, with independent director Corazon O. Abaya and Amado Santiago Jr.; the Compensation and Remuneration Committee, also chaired by Teresita E. Dizon, with independent director Emelia H. Feliciano and Mamerto; the Audit Committee, with independent director Abaya, Mamerto, Agapito P. Dizon-Gil, and the Executive Committee, chaired by Mamerto and with members Teresita E. Dizon, Rafael F. Dizon III and Gregorio C. Dizon. *Compiled by Jason Alcanzar, PDI Research*

Exchange Rates

Country	Unit	Buy (Peso Equivalent)	Sell (Peso Equivalent)	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	55.9563	56.0563	56.0563
Japan	Yen	0.5097	0.5107	0.5107
United Kingdom	Pound	1.0161	1.0181	1.0181
Hong Kong	Dollar	7.1942	7.2042	7.2042
Switzerland	Franc	0.4455	0.4465	0.4465
Canada	Dollar	0.4823	0.4833	0.4833
Singapore	Dollar	0.3414	0.3424	0.3424
Australia	Dollar	0.4184	0.4194	0.4194
Bahrain	Dinar	0.1484	0.1494	0.1494
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	0.1492	0.1502	0.1502
Kuwait	Dollar	0.1826	0.1836	0.1836
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.0055	0.0056	0.0056
Thailand	Baht	0.1381	0.1391	0.1391
UAE	Dirham	0.1523	0.1533	0.1533
Euro	Euro	0.6606	0.6646	0.6646
Argentina	Peso	0.0176	0.0186	0.0186
Brazil	Real	0.0233	0.0243	0.0243
Denmark	Krone	0.0887	0.0897	0.0897
India	Rupee	0.0122	0.0132	0.0132
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.0147	0.0157	0.0157
Mexico	Peso	0.0051	0.0061	0.0061
New Zealand	Dollar	0.3703	0.3713	0.3713
South Korea	Won	0.0562	0.0572	0.0572
Sweden	Krona	0.0078	0.0088	0.0088
Taiwan	Dollar	0.1707	0.1717	0.1717
Qatar	Riyal	0.0154	0.0164	0.0164
Norway	Krone	0.0855	0.0865	0.0865

BIR overstates . . .

The correction also means that the BIR's collection for the January to August period was only P324.43 billion compared with the P333.43 billion reported earlier. It reflect, the BIR was still P9.2 billion—and not P7.9 billion—short of the P342.7 billion that it was tasked to collect for the eight-month period.

RP posts record 8-mo BOP surplus

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY POSTED A balance of payments surplus of $2.29 billion from January to August this year, rebounding from a $200-million deficit a year ago, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported yesterday.

It was the strongest nationwide BOP level seen so far this decade, reversing the build-up of the country's gross international reserves to an all-time high of $17.85 billion as of end-August.

"The BOP surplus was a product of sustained exports, high overseas Filipino workers' remittances, considerable inflows of foreign direct and portfolio investments and proceeds from external borrowings," said BSP Officer-in-Charge Javier Datingaling.

For the month of August alone, the BOP surplus stood at $207 million, a turnaround from a deficit of $125 million a year ago.

The August surplus was also better than the $74-million surplus recorded in July this year.

The BOP measures the foreign exchange transactions between the economy and the rest of the world. Its major components are the current account and the capital and financial accounts.

The current account records funds in goods and services as well as cash transfers, such as remittances from migrant workers.

During the period in review, the foreign exchange inflows were boosted largely by the proceeds from the loans of National Power Corp., earnings from the BSP's foreign exchange operations and income from overseas investments.

In the meantime, Datingaling reported that after recording net inflows for six consecutive weeks, the BSP's foreign portfolio investments received a big hit for the week ending Sept. 9 showing an overall net outflow of $29.8 million.

Downstream natural gas sector secures funding commitment

Energy, mining getting attractive to US investors

By Ronnel W. Domingo

A GROUP OF US-BASED BANKS committed to help raise a $1-billion funding facility for the local downstream natural gas industry. Trade and Industry Secretary Peter B. Favila said yesterday.

Favila, who is accompanying President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in her visit to the US, said in a statement that this commitment was contained in a memorandum of understanding signed in New York by the US National Bank Association and Energy Undersecretary Perfecto Yasay Jr. Favila said the banks' commitment means the success of the administration's economic campaign in attracting American investors to do business in the Philippines, specifically in the power sector and the mining industry.

FAVILA

Under the agreement, the Department of Energy is tasked to promote the importation of passenger buses that run on compressed natural gas through the Natural Gas Vehicle Program for Public Transport.

The DOE is also responsible to encourage the establishment of a network of CNG depots and refilling stations.

For its part, US National Bank Association will advise the energy department on matters related to trade financing and assist in securing financing for the project.

Favila also said Philippine officials were able to address the issues of American investors during a series of meetings in the on-going privatization program in the power sector.

He said several American businessmen felt that the current situation in the Philippine power and mining sectors showed that it "makes a lot of good economic sense to do business" in the country.

Among the investment opportunities that were promoted in the US were the sale of four power facilities in the country, such as the Caliraya-Botocan-Kalayaan project in Batangas, the Pantabangan and the Masiway hydro projects in Nueva Ecija, and the Limay thermal plant in Bataan.

Favila said the President's economic team also gave interested investors an update on the privatization of the National Transmission Corp., now the subject of a valuation by a private firm accredited by the Energy Regulatory Commission.

BOI cancels registration of 146 investment projects

THE BOARD OF INVESTMENTS CANCELLED the registration of and the incentives made available to 146 investment projects due to their failure to comply with the seven-million requirement.

The BOI issued a list of companies whose registrations and tax perks were cancelled, including garment firms, steel and metal manufacturers, and electronics producers.

BOI officials said many of these companies could no longer be found in their supposed addresses. Most of them, it added, failed to submit routine reports such as tax payments and other documents required of business establishments.

The list was a result of the agency's monitoring of BOI-registered firms conducted from May to August.

The BOI had required those in the list to surrender within 15 days upon receipt of the notice their certificates of registration.

According to the implementing rules of the Omnibus Investments Code of 1987, the registration of projects could be revoked on the following grounds:

- failure to maintain qualifications for registration as required by the code;
- violation of any provision of the code or violation of any of those rules and regulations or any of the general or specific terms and conditions for registration; and
- violation of any law for the protection of labor or of the consuming public.

Another rule stated that registration could be cancelled automatically if there was a delay of one year in the implementation of the project attributable as set by the BOI and if the firm withdrew from or suspended its operations. Ronnel W. Domingo

17 wind sites up for development

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY WILL OFFER for development 17 wind sites to potential investors in the next few weeks.

This would be the government's follow-up to the 1st Wind Power Contracting Round held in March where 10 wind sites were offered to investors for development.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said 17 wind sites with a total generating capacity of 500 megawatts (MW) would be offered to prospective investors for the second contracting round.

In Luzon, the potential sites include those in Ilocos and Batanes in Bangui with potentials of 40 MW each, Tagaytay Cavite with 30 MW, and Bread Javelier with 70 MW, Dasmol and Pilar with 40 MW each and Matnog with 100 MW all in Sorsogon.

The Visayas wind sites to be offered for development are those in Dumaguete in Bohol with a potential of 30 MW, Siquijor with 30 MW, Camotes and Oslob in Cebu with 20 MW and 20 MW, respectively; Allen Lavezares in Northern Samar with 15 MW, and Tinian Quinapo in Southern Leyte with 15 MW.

The lone wind site in Mindanao to be offered to investors is in Caparan in Surigao Del Norte with a potential of 30 MW.

According to Department of Energy data, the country's wind wind potential is placed at around 70,000 MW.

Of the 10 sites offered during the 1st Wind Power Contracting Round, Lotilla said pre-contractual contracts (PCCs) had been issued to Clean Breeze for the development of five sites.

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Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Circular No. 453
Series of 2005

Pursuant to Monetary Board Resolution No. 1025 dated 4 August 2005, Section 8145.c of the Manual of Regulations for Banks (MORB) and Section 4144D.c of the Manual of Regulations for Non-Bank Financial Institutions (MORNBFI), as amended by Circular No. 448 dated 2 September 2004, are hereby amended as follows:

Item 1 shall be added to Section 8145.c of the MORB and Section 4144D.c of the MORNBFI, as amended by Circular No. 448 dated 2 September 2004, to read as follows:

"As a general rule, there shall be no concurrent officerships between banks/NBQBs or between a bank/NBQB and non-bank financial intermediary, whether or not performing quasi-banking functions, except as follows:

a. x x x

b. x x x

c. WITH PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE MONETARY BOARD, THE FOLLOWING CONCURRENT OFFICERSHIP POSITIONS IN THE SAME CAPACITY WHICH DO NOT INVOLVE MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS, I.E., INTERNAL AUDITOR, CORPORATE SECRETARY, ASSISTANT CORPORATE SECRETARY AND SECURITY OFFICER, MAY BE ALLOWED BETWEEN A BANK/NBQB AND TWO (2) OWNERS OF ITS SUBSIDIARY/A FULLY FINANCIAL INSTITUTION WITHIN THE GROUP."

This Circular shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

For the Monetary Board:

(Sgd.) AMANDO M. TETANGCO, JR.
Governor

August 31, 2005

BUSINESS

Strike looms at Makati Med

By Clarissa S. Ibañez

EMPLOYEES OF MAKATI MEDICAL CENTER [illegible] hospital operations over an impasse in [illegible] bargaining agreement with management.

And if the workers proceed with their plan to strike, management may have to call their bluff and shut down the hospital for good, according to a hospital official.

Cristina Mendoza, Makati Med president, said the planned strike was making the company's creditors anxious, and motivated investors nervous.

The hospital is trying to restructure P1.3 billion in bank debts. It is also trying to [illegible] at least P100 million in fresh capital.

But a workers' strike, especially a prolonged one, could prompt banks to call in the loans instead of lengthen their maturity. It could also drive away the new money and investors.

"If the strike pushes through ... we would lose patients and this would severely hit our finances," said the Makati Med president. "We may not recover when that happens, so there is a danger that the hospital would close if the pressure becomes too great."

The employees' union on Sept. 12 filed a notice of strike with the labor department.

Mendoza said the union and management could not agree on the terms of a new CBA [illegible] the previous one falls due this year.

The management asked the workers for a two-year moratorium on wage hikes. The union wants a P1,500 increase in the monthly salary across the board.

Makati Med workers are not convinced that the hospital is in a really bad shape, according to Mendoza.

Once the country's premier hospital, the 60-year old Makati Med [illegible] from [illegible] in 2002 to 2004, partly due to [illegible].

"We just hope our employees would understand and give us [illegible] the financial operations of the hospital," said Mendoza. "They [illegible] talking about a wage hike."

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SATURDAY Special

NOW SHOWING

Crowe, Howard triumph anew

CROWE AND ZELLWEGER
Play James and Mae Braddock in moving biopic

By Rito P. Asilo

"Cinderella Man"

D: Ron Howard

S: Russell Crowe, Renée Zellweger, Paul Giamatti

YOU HAVE TO GIVE IT TO RON Howard—the guy makes movies that are diverse and consistently crap-resistant (in his latest cinematic triumph, he demonstrates a man's uphill struggle to keep his family together during the Great Depression, and redefines classic movie "fairy tale" conventions by bringing us the big screen the true-to-life story of an unlikely "Cinderella" upset protagonist, 1930 heavyweight boxing champion, James J. Braddock.

In this moving triumph of the human spirit, Howard recounts how a down-on-his-luck former prizefighter rose to inspire a whole country torn by social unrest and a bad economy. Everything about Depression-era America is full, again—but, his moving spirit is kept alive by his focused, empathetic cast, Mary (Renée Zellweger), and Jim (Paul Giamatti), who look up to him as their hero.

Indeed, when everything in our world looks grim and bleak, the family will always be there to keep us sane and grateful for life's small blessings.

Crowe may be one of Hollywood's biggest brats, but he is also arguably its most talented actor. He electrifies the screen every time when he's assigned to play white cops and outsider ("Gladiator"), portray a newly-inducted genius ("A Beautiful Mind"), inhabit the mind of a remorseless criminal ("Romper Stomper"), or spar to the ring with hungry for blood boxing opponents. Zellweger and Paul Giamatti (as Braddock's manager) lend able support.

Ultimately, Howard's film, one of the year's best, inspires by giving those who have had runs of bad luck reason to cheer. In Braddock's life, a real sense of hope springs from the populist's unwavering resolve to rise from the rut. And Howard deftly demonstrates that, sometimes, fairy tales do come true. Being a child hereby...no, optional.

CONTINUED ON C3

Mikee lends credibility to TV campaign

By Nestor U. Torre

WISHING FIRST-SHAKUTIM THEAKUTI: star data Foundation for Children and Televi- stor had tapped Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski to be its official spokesperson, we thought the appointment was most apt, even inspired.

Perfect choice

As a champion equestrienne, actress, TV host, celebrity role model and young mother, Mikee possesses a rare combination of attributes that makes her the perfect choice as the face and voice of the foundation's landmark campaign for child-friendly responsible and balanced TV programming.

Our very positive first impression was decisively affirmed when we recently joined Mikee and other SHAPCTV stalwarts in an Arab TV Soul soirée in the Visayas. Mikee took time from her busy schedule to speak to an audience of more than 200 community leaders in Cebu City, to boost their resolve to improve the quality and productive use of television.

Experience

Mikee's experience as a communicator served her well in connecting with her eager audience. In addition, her natural, almost-shy no-frills way of talking made the points she raised eminently clear and accessible to her listeners.

Best of all, Mikee came through as a young mother who was concerned about the potentially negative effects of irresponsible TV programming on her children.

She quickly established that she had a personal stake in the success of the foundation's campaign, so she was speaking, not from academic detachment but from experience.

Thus, she was able to share details and specifics about how she controlled the influence of television in her own home, to make sure that her young sons would be spared its more negative effects.

And, having read extensively on the subject, she was able to expand on her personal experience, to share a more comprehensive view of how viewers, especially parents, can establish a more child-friendly TV environment in their homes.

Thus properly primed and motivated, the people at the media conference in Cebu were set to answer a number of TV proposals, and evaluate their suitability for viewing by children, which the foundation would later recognize by way of Anak TV Seals for the best of those programs.

Involvement

We hope that Mikee can join the SHAPCTV's officials in their other sorties to different parts of the country. The foundation's Anak TV Seal campaign can benefit enormously from her personal involvement. We trust, too, that other respected celebrities will also lend their populist and credibility to the foundation's campaign to improve the local TV landscape, for all our children's sake.

COJUANGCO-JAWORSKI: Concerned about potentially negative effects of irresponsible programming on television.

Crowe, Zellweger...

From page C1

"Lovestruck"

Dr. Louie Ignacio
A: Jolina Magdangal, Jeanylyn Mercado, Mark Herras

This week's other "fairy tale"—about childhood buddies, Gaby (Mark Herras) and Denise (Jeanylyn Mercado), who grow up realizing that they've fallen for each other—plays out its narrative like a glossy moon-video: fog machines and bubbles are an ever-present on Jolina Magdangal to lend a dreamy, mystical mood to romance, romance or otherwise. Sightseeing and impressionable Denise pines for Jason (Mike Tan) before she realizes the error of her ways—her Prince Charming is just around the corner, and she's been overlooking her understable dominance with him until he . . . well, get the drift?

The hard fans may initially enjoy the costume fighting and flirting of Bertas and Mercado, along with the truly incredible gender-bending side story that features Rainier Castillo and Yasmien Kurdi. But, after seeing them Sunday faces night and make up at least once, the novelty quickly wears off.

Not even the well-sung musical numbers of the omnipresent Jolina, who runs out her secrets in various politically incorrect locations (even one's bedroom), or the star-studded, dark-haired characters with a prominent chin and silly regional accents (how long caused to be hairy), could help elevate the film from its trite and predictable storyline and piss-for-lilly style. But, it's great to see a youthful Vilma Santos and the returning Lorna Tolentino, despite the latter's schmaltzy participation, back on the big screen.

"Wild Side"

Dr. Sebastien Lifshitz
S: Stephanie Michelini, Edouard Nikiforov

The world as seen through the eyes of "Wild Side"'s transgender protagonist, native-female transsexual prostitute, Stephanie aka Pierre (Stephanie Michelini) may be a desolate one, but the movie's montage of poetic hope and gender-bending love among sacred souls permeates to 93-minute running time.

In Lifshitz' surreal Berlin Bardot-arising French feature, Stephanie reluctantly goes back to her childhood home after 17 years, where she is summoned to end to a sick mother.

On her trip, she brings along her two-year-illegal Russian immigrant Mikhail (Edouard Nikiforov) and migrates with her lured (Vincent Brémaud). But, she has to come to grips with her bittersweet past and convalesce the unsentimental lifestyle she leads.

The film's subject matter may put off conservative viewers, but Lifshitz' thoughtful film (currently being screened at Robinsons Galleria) outbeats with to portrayed perfect cinematography (the beautiful French countryside, naked bodies, etc.), and its message of hope and love among the ruins. Film buffs, don't miss it!

"A Sound of Thunder"

D: Peter Hyams
A: Edward Burns, Ben Kingsley, Catherine McCormack

It's 2055, Chicago. Americana entrepreneur Charles Hatton (Ben Kingsley) develops a time machine that allows hotel, wealthy men to go back 65 million years into the past for an experience, dinosaur-hunting safari. But, there are rules to follow: Don't change anything from the past; don't leave anything behind, and don't bring anything back to the future—or risk altering the course of history. And it is Dr. Travis Byer's (Edward Burns) job to make sure the time continuum remains unchanged.

After one fateful trip, however, a tropical bear scare suddenly replaces the usually chilly November weather. Then, creatures that go bump in the night...and like...start to surface! Someone order, Travis has to go back in time . . . before the future is entirely annihilated by the sins of the past.

Peter Hyams adapts Ray Bradbury's cautionary short story to the big screen. A "Jurassic Park"-rip-off, the film's premise is intriguing, but it is marred by special effects that look dated, and an uninspired script that lacks the urgency and tension needed to keep the sci-fi tale interesting. The only thing that helps the movie offset is Burns' strong presence.

SATURDAY Special

The rehabilitation of Paris Hilton

By Hazel G. Torre

SOME WEEKS AGO, SOME CELEBRITIES only half-jokingly dissed Paris Hilton and described her as a social menace due to the wrong values that her dizzy, spoiled brat antics exhibited, particularly for the impressionable youth. Why are we even giving her attention as down as Paris? Have much of a "social menace" is she, really?

A big part of the viewing public's negative view of Paris Hilton, the star said the persona, can be attributed to the reality trip called *Simple Life* she was born with the proverbial silver spoon in her pretty mouth, and attitude stinkbombs were really there most. Can you blame the love-will-condemned for everything her famous ex-in-law, and thinking ill of her was a result?

Image

Paris' "signature" TV show, "The Simple Life," has further soured up her image. Its first edition had her unashamedly beside Nicole Ritchie, living with a series of hapless families in small towns, and showing the look out of them with their rich kind-of-a.

Outwardly, the show has Paris and Nicole appreciating as a series of yokey jobs like sewage-working, and generally making a mess of everything. That was only add to viewers' distaste and even disgust for the two stupid, stupid socialites-in-values and lifestyles that Middle America truly does.

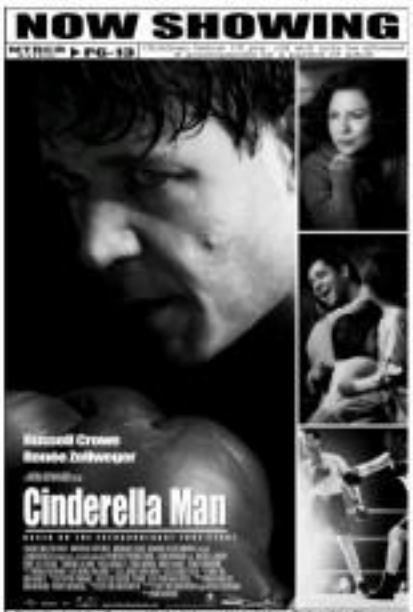
If Paris really is bored in her show patrons her! Not hardly. If anything, the star is a willing victim of her show's contrast being so angry and disagreeable all the time without help from an entire crewmen and producers were would be too exhausting for a young star to manage.

Good-despite-marks

That is, when she was in her occasional film reviews, she is give-pump good despite marks from reviewers. This suggests that, while her public image depicts her as a lazy and malevolent role-bitch, the actress is in

WATCH: Between the proverbial silver spoon in her pretty mouth, she obviously needs more study than most.

'Ilusyon' gets top grade from CEB



By Rica Arevalo

PEREN ELLEN RAMOS AND SHAUN Pilkinton let the cruel the script of their debut feature, "Ilusyon," my first question was, "How will this movie be different from the current sex flicks shown in the mainstream?" Shots said that their film would not be a cheap, typically exploitative picture.

True enough, "Ilusyon" is the first digital feature to get a grade of 'A' from the Cinema Evaluation Board (CEB).

Set in the late 1950s, the film tells the story of Miguel (Tal Serior), who visits his father, Pablo, a modernist painter in Manila. He meets Stella (Jaymee Medel), a maid. Amidst Miguel is mesmerized by her beauty and reminds that he is Pablo.

Collaborators

Ellen and Perlo are constant collaborators in graphic design, videos and commercials. They made the "death box" animation of Eddie Garcia in "Kill Bill #1". Paulo confesses, "Although we have personality differences, we find that our creative sensibilities are basically the same."

"On the set, Ellen focuses on the design while I work with the actors. We then collaborate on the shots and the mood of each scene."

Ellen is renowned for her collaboration, as she has received several awards from both local and international film festivals, wherein Perlo is known for his documentary "Pahiyad," a horse carabonsal that won the Orion for best short film in 2001.

According to Paulo, while directing "Ilusyon," the atmosphere on the set was generally fun. "That's one thing we learned from Jon Red while watching him direct 'Bomb'—the director carries the general mood on the set and everyone else will pick up on that. Establishing an atmosphere where everyone wants to be creative and have fun is essential."

Ready for anything

Line producers Jess and Gumi Red helped put up the "indie" team in Ilusyon. Yet's second outing, "The good thing when you come from the indie set up is that you're ready for anything, and are willing to make adjustments.

"So indie fans, you're forced to do something out of scratch so to have anything more than nothing is really a blessing," says Paulo.

Good sign

How did they react to their CEB rating? "We were honest by shocked, because we thought only films with big budgets and commercially polished treatments could get a grade of 'A'. It's a good sign, especially for our community, because it says that small films can be noticed."

"Ilusyon" will compete in the Cinemalaya October 21st month.

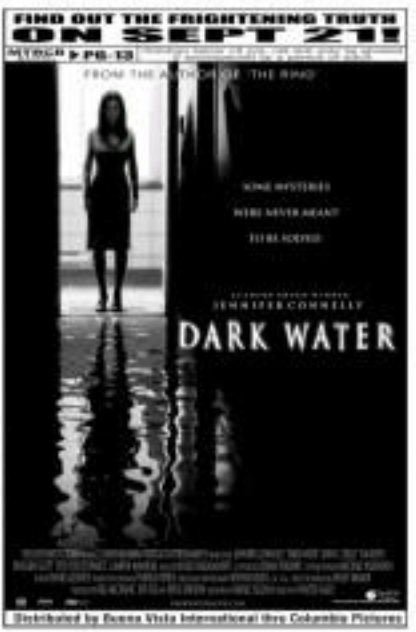
The rehabilitation of Paris Hilton

Continued from A1

lure a reliable and even hardworking professional.

This area was reinforced for us recently when we're appointed as the main guest star on the popular and long-running comedy show, "Saturday Night Live." "SNL" is one of the best shows on TV, with a regular cast of some of the finest comedians in the business, so grooming us it a look as boost and a challenge.

To her credit, she's gave her comic scenes in the show everything she had, and came off a real winner. Now, you don't exhibit be just passing your way through your scenes, so they're good showing proved that she was both gifted and hardworking as a performer. On way he a rich bitch, but she's she much more than that?

What's up next for Paris Hilton? She's engaged to be married to hip-hop magnate's son she looked back...how about that?...and she says that her dirty, rapid-weight and lying-filing days are officially over.

Now, Ms. Hilton, the rehabilitation